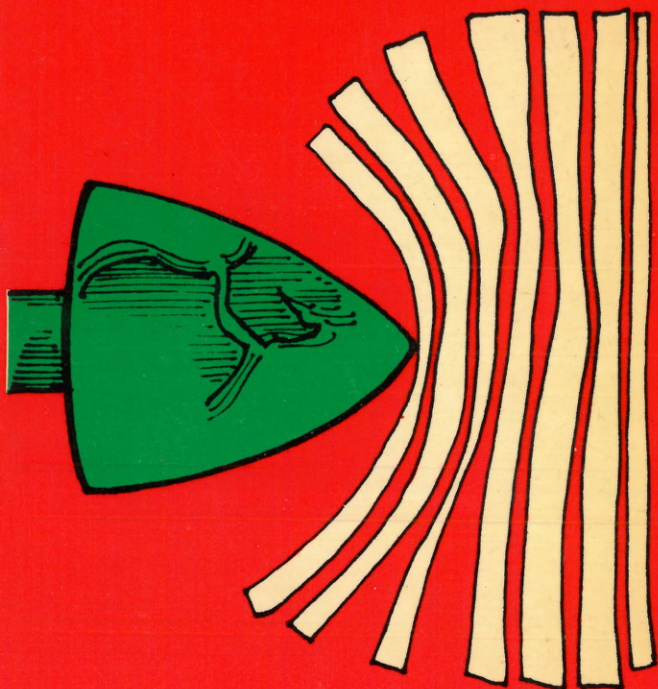


Arab Ba'th Socialist Party

# ARAB REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT IN THE FACE OF CURRENT CHALLENGES

Elyâs Farah



Unity Freedom Socialism





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## Editor's Note

The Arab Socialist Ba'th Party regards all Arabs as being part of one nation both in the cultural and spiritual sense. The different countries in which they live, make up a politically and economically united fatherland. In the Party's documents, «the Arab fatherland» means all the Arab countries. Each of these is a «qotr» which, literally translated, means country; in the Ba'th context, it should be read as province or region. The adjective «qotri» (provincial, regional) is used when referring to an individual country. The adjective «qawmi» (national), on the other hand, is used when referring to all the countries which together make up the one fatherland. Thus, the National Directorate deals only with matters concerning the whole fatherland. Each Regional Directorate deals with matters within its own country. As for example, the Lebanese or Jordanian Regional Directorate etc.

The word Ba'th can be translated as meaning revival, resurgence or renewal. Hitherto, resurgence seems to be the meaning which is preferred by Arab intellectuals and foreign Arab experts.



## Chapter I

# Arab Revolutionary Thought at the Threshold of a New Stage

With the beginning of the forties, portentous signs of an important phenomenon for the contemporary life of Arabs began to appear. This phenomenon corresponds to a crystallization of Arab revolutionary thought around new revolutionary principles. The Arab revolutionary ideology, represented by the theory of Unity, Freedom and Socialism, emerged as the expression of a modern and authentic vision which deals in a new way with the reality of the present Arab situation and the future perspectives of the nation. The ideology asserted itself since the beginning as a step beyond —total and not partial, qualitative and not quantitative, dialectical and not formalistic— all the tendencies, currents and theoretical positions which at that time made up the Arab political scene. The current expressed in doctrines and ideologies, like those which simply consisted of brandishing strategic slogans expressing fundamental principles, were left behind. This can be explained by the fact that all the theories which preceded the birth of the Arab revolutionary ideology had failed to identify the primary contradiction in Arab life and social reality. The currents of thought had not succeeded in defining the objectives

necessary to pursue during the historical stage in question.

If we go back to the forties in order to re-examine the socio-political theses which then prevailed, which, for the most part, did nothing but repeat and develop what had been proposed by the Arab Rebirth, we can see several currents standing out and evolving in different socio-political frameworks. Most important among these are:

1. *The reformist civic-religious current*, represented by such forerunners as: the professors Rif at Al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), Jamâl Ad-Dîn Al Afghâni (1839-1897), Mouhammad 'Abdah (1849-1905), Mouhammad Rashîd Ridhâ (1865-1925) and their students. This current attempted to be an overcoming of two other contradictory currents:

a) On the one hand, the religious traditionalist current, whose conception of Islam was a purely formal one. This current had falsified the very essence of the religion; it was patently conservative. Confining thought in the restricting framework of imitation of the past (of the Toglîd), it «closed the door of the Ijtihâd»,\* thus opposing any exchange or opening of Muslim societies toward the evolution of modern science and civilization.

b) On the other hand, the rationalist and secular current whose conceptions, having no contact with concrete reality, did not take into account the link between present and past. This current, representing, in a way, an escape toward a future cut off from real

\* The Ijtihâd is the freedom of interpretation to which all Muslims have a right. The closing of the door of the Ijtihâd, i.e., the prohibition of all free thought, was one of the fundamental causes of decadence, the expansion of obscurantism and ignorance. It is the religious reformists cited above who re-opened this door (editor's note).



historical continuity, expressed reformist tendencies of a utopian character, swallowed up in subjectivity and spontaneism, and lost in «progressive dreams».

2. *The nationalist religious current*, whose forerunner is Alad Ar-Rahmân Al Kawâkibî (1849-1903). His essential ideas are expressed in two books entitled *Characteristics of Despotism* (Tabâi Al Istibdâd) and *The Mother City* (Dum al Qura). Al Kawâkibî considers that the Arab nation is the only one capable of preserving Islam from decadence. He called for the «setting up of an Arab Caliphate» and wanted the center of the Arab-Muslim Empire «to be transferred from Ottoman territory to the Arabian Peninsula». His religious reformist ideas were in agreement with Arab nationalism.

The key idea of this movement of thought is the substantial and organic link between Arabism and Islam.

The Muslim religion, understood as a spiritual and social experience of a revolutionary character, succeed in giving expression to the Arab nation in the fullness of its soul. On the contrary, Arabism, for Al Kawâkibî, is the best guarantee for the safeguard of Islam in its essence.

3. *The current of historicist nationalism*, whose themes appear in the writings of the first generation of Arab thinkers of the Rebirth such as the Sheik Nâ-sîf Al-Yâzi-gî (1800-1871), Bontros Al Boustânî (1819-1883) and Georgi Zaïdân (1861-1914). All three tried to revive the Arabs' energy by reminding them of their past glory and the brilliant civilization. They glorified their dignity and power and proclaimed their pride in belonging to the Arab civilization. Their goal, through all these procedures, was to move their compatriots to become reawakened to the consciousness of their history.

4. *Socio-progressive thought*, which was expressed in the writings of the forerunners of socialism in the Arab homeland, such as Shibli Shoumayel (1850-1917) who, glorifying science and preaching darwinism, was the author of the first program of the Egyptian Socialist Party, in 1908. Another thinker, Qâsim Amîn (1865-1908), former student of Mouhammed 'Abdah, belonged to the same school as Shoumayel and defended the freedom of women. In his two books entitled *The Liberation of the Woman* (Tahrîr al-marâ) and *The New Woman* (al-marâ al-jadîda) he gave remarkable attention to social problems and social progress.

Also belonging to this same school of thought were all the ideas which oriented and guided the peasant uprisings in the homeland, in particular the «Lebanese Communes» of 1858-1859, which called for the setting up of a popular republican regime.

5. *Regionalist tendencies*, which were limited to regional links (regionalist patriotism) or to determined geographical frameworks, such as the «Fertile Crescent» of «The Nile Valley». These tendencies also took the form of a nationalist theory in a narrow sense, dividing the Arab nation into several «distinct nations» such as «the Syrian Nation». Overstepping the geographic limits of the Arab homeland, the defenders of these «nationalism», called for a more vast geographical and cultural membership such as the «eastern tendency» or «middle-eastern». The idea of an Asiatic continent, of an Asiatic civilization, or of a Mediterranean geo-cultural ensemble dominated their thought.

Also belonging to this multi-formed current of thought were fundamentalists, pharaonic and phoenician tendencies.

All these tendencies are at the origin of the attitudes of response such as the turn inward and the defense

against real or imaginary dangers. All the pretexts of all these theories only serve to conceal the actual thrusts of these negative attitude.

6. *The «pure» nationalist tendency* is represented by thinkers such as Najîr 'Âzurî, author of a book entitled *Yaqdhat al-oumma-l-'arabiyya* (The Awakening of the Arab Nation), which appeared in 1905, and Refiq al-'adhm, who, in his book entitled *Al Jâmi'a-l-islâmiyya wa ouroubba* (The Islamic League and Europe) which appeared in 1907, insists on the fact that national membership is more encompassing than religious membership in a multi-faith society. He affirmed that «ethnic and patriotic links have primacy over religious links because religious disparities cannot prevent national links from being consolidated, and cannot be opposed to nationalist political ends».

Also belonging to this school of thought was Alî Nâsir ad-Dîn, the founder of «the Organization for National Action» ('Ousbat al-'amal-al-gawmî) whose theories appeared in his books *The Cause of the Arabs* (qadhiyyat al-'arab), published in 1946. And *It is Thus that We were Writing* (hokadha kounna noktoub), published in 1952, as well as Constantin Zourâïq, author of *The National Consciousness* (Al wa'i al-gawmî), and Sati' al-Husarî, author of several works in which he defends the nationalist theory.

Among all these thinkers, one would search in vain for social content. The national cause is in no way linked to social problems.

7. *The Anti-national Internalist current*: This tendency began to make itself known particularly at the beginnings of the Stalinist era. Its representatives stood up against all nationalism, adopted a negative attitude against the idea of Arab unity or any national dimension

given to Arab problems. They presented social problems and the class struggle in a theoretical and abstract way, without having concretely analysed the real immediate data. Taking their inspiration from the traditional schemas of analysis applied in capitalist societies they attempted to impose them in a completely mechanical way, onto the realities of Arab society. Confined in the limits of the Arab region where they lived they passed over their membership in the Arab homeland in order to defend internationalism. Moving along this line they did not take a fundamental contradiction of Arab society into account in their analyses: that of disunion.

If we re-examine the ideological background of all these tendencies which came before the appearance of the Arab revolutionary ideology, we can then recognize the existence of a conflict, whether declared or implicit, among an ensemble of diverse elements. It is no doubt this conflict which is at the origin of these currents of thought, and of the forms which they took when they appeared on the Arab political scene.

The conflict turned around:

- Different cultural schemas,
- Opposing social classes,
- Exterior forces operating in an effective manner, and having a profound impact on Arab social realities.

The Arab revolutionary ideology, which is summarized in the theory Unity, Freedom and Socialism, appeared as a new, authentic and modern vision, endowed with a new conception of the present realities and of the future of Arabs. Contrary to the fundamentalist, conservative vision, the Arab revolutionary ideology knows how to place stress on the socio-cultural Arab heritage without being confined within the limitations of the past.

Although open to the international revolutionary heritage, it does not lose itself there. It differs in this way

from traditional socialist schools. Despite its attachment to a schema of thought capable of recognizing in a profound and exhaustive way the nature of the historical stage through which the Arab nation is now passing, in the framework of present international situations, this new ideology never considered knowledge as an end in itself. To be complete, such a profound and exhaustive analysis of the Arab and international situation must have a third source, in addition to those of the national and international heritage: that of militancy. The defenders of the Arab revolutionary ideology are fully conscious of this necessity and know that the Arab masses place all their hopes in and mobilize all their potentialities for the struggle. For it is only through struggle that they can ensure their survival, assume their destiny and make their cause victorious. Drawing from these three sources, Arab revolutionary ideology was able to forge its unitary theory and its socialist conceptions, taking precedence over the intellectual and political current defended by the regionalists, the «pure» nationalists, the champions of Islam and of other religions, the regional socialists, the bourgeois reformists, the anti-national socialists, etc. Arab revolutionary thought succeeds in placing itself in the vanguard of all these currents.

During the fifties and sixties, Arab revolutionary thought was able to test, in practice, the ideas it had advocated. In analyzing the experiences of unity, secession, the phenomena of regionalism and bureaucracy, as well as the factors which caused the many failures of Arab revolutionary action, Arab revolutionary ideology was able to demonstrate its scientific and profound character. But, on the other hand, it was also able to discover that great deficiency, the gap between theory and practice.

The gap between thought and action was still greater than that which separated the popular masses and the

Arab regimes. This contradiction necessarily had to assert itself and Arab revolutionary thought was obliged to resolve it in order to remove the Arab struggles from the vicious circle in which they had been confined and in which the very idea of struggle had been imprisoned, endlessly risking its suffocation.

On the occasion of the 26th anniversary of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, the Party that struggles for Unity, Freedom and Socialism (April 7, 1974), the problem brought up earlier was posed in the form of two complementary questions:

1. In the course of the preceding historical stage, what has been the ideological contribution of the Ba'th Party, and what are the fundamental characteristics of its revolutionary vision?

2. What are the current ideological challenges and the principal tendencies in the evolution of the revolutionary Arab ideology?

There is no doubt that the answer to these two questions will be one of the fundamental lessons that the Arab Revolution will be able to learn from this anniversary of the founding of this revolutionary movement of great historical significance, and whose inspiration and founder —Professor Michel 'Aflaq— wanted to endow it with the capacity for untiringly assuming its tasks for centuries.

1973

## Chapter II

# The Ideological Contribution of the Ba'th Party

If we want to study the ideological contribution of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party during the quarter-century that has just gone by, we must first remind ourselves of the following truths:

1. First of all, we must insist on the importance given by the Party to ideology and therefore, we must again bear in mind the stage which preceded the birth of the Ba'th, that which covers the years 1940 to 1947. That stage was essentially one of maturation for the Ba'th ideology. This party was first created under the form of an «idea of struggle». From its beginnings, it was aware that no profound revolutionary action of any historical dimension was foreseeable without first the formation of a revolutionary and scientific ideology capable of providing an exhaustive analysis of the principal characteristics of the historical stage the nation was crossing. In one of his declarations, the founder of the Ba'th says:

«Thought in itself is already a force of history and an inestimable revolutionary force. The act of placing the Arab cause in the framework of a system of comprehensive thought alone is the first contribution to the

consolidation of the Arab revolutionary movement, in providing it with solid bases.»

These remarks by Comrade 'Aflaq had earlier constituted the axis around which turned the declarations and newspaper articles of the forties and the early fifties. Stressing this fundamental idea, Comrade 'Aflaq similarly formed a critique of abstract thought, and one of reactionary theories («The Arabs Between their Past and their Future», 1950). He endlessly affirmed «that a revolutionary movement would not know to control itself, nor would it be able to dominate the circumstances through which it passes unless, at the same time, it is a total ideological movement, i. e., unless it rises to the level of the cause that it wants to defend».

The insistence on this fundamental necessity did not spring merely from Comrade Aflaq's awareness of the importance of a revolutionary theory for any action wishing to be revolutionary. It was also the logical consequence of his conception of the national problem, a conception which betokens the great depth of vision in Comrade 'Aflaq's understanding of man and civilization and which corresponds to the necessities of the historical stage through which the Arab nation was passing, as well as to those of the contemporary epoch. This conception also springs from a specific attitude that Comrade 'Aflaq adopted with regard to the present, the past and the future:

«If we look at the contemporary Arab Rebirth, we can see that the initial phase through which it passed was that of consequences undergone in an emotional and negative way. In fact, all the aspects of the Rebirth at its beginnings are reactions against the earlier states of decadence and immobility. They reproduced, almost to the letter, the very characteristics of the socio-political state against which the advocacy of the Rebirth had risen up and which they wanted to destroy. If the first



phase of our Rebirth was masked by this negativity, it is scarcely permissible that this situation continue. The psychological and intellectual state which calls for an authentic movement can only be a reaction to a conjunctural situation in the life of the nation. Colonialism, feudalism and regionalism are negative, but conjunctural, phenomena. Must we forget our idea of values, our vision of the future, entirely on the basis of an unhealthy, purely conjunctural state? Must we be satisfied in arousing semi-mechanical reactions in the nation against the social evils which overwhelm it? Or should we instead be preoccupied with the will of the nation and its aspiration to an authentic life? We must instead militate for a positive realization: the creation of a re-emerging and developed Arab society, built on the principles and supreme values of justice, equality and freedom.»

These words of Comrade Michel 'Aflaq are excerpts from an article published in 1947, entitled «The Arab Ba'th is a positive Attitude, Permitting It to Clarify the Ideological Role of the Party». He continues in this vein in *The Battle of the Unique Destiny* (ma'rakat al-masî'al-wâhid, p. 37):

«Those who have shown an interest in the history of the Ba'th Party, at least from an ideological point of view, can see that since its birth, our movement has shown itself to be profoundly preoccupied with one fundamental objective: to make the Ba'thist movement one that is likely to take a positive step toward finding a political solution responding to the positive necessities of the nation. Our society suffers from unhealthy states. Remedies are proposed, but they remain artificial. A specific ideological procedure asserts itself in order to forge a theory inspired by the living Arab history, which supplants and surpasses the reactionary theories, as well as pseudo-progressivism.»

2. This preoccupation and this insistence on the importance of a thought committed to the defense of the national cause and reinforcing the responsibilities of the struggle for freedom, unity and progress of the Arab nation, and the role accorded to an ideology molded in struggle have, in turn, permitted the discernment of two other fundamental truths:

a) The Arabs will only be able to surmount the difficult phase they are crossing, marked by alienation and intellectual confusion, and free themselves from their emotional reactions, if they confront the causes that concern them with retrospective and profound interior vision and can assimilate the teachings of the struggles and revolutions taking place everywhere in the world, especially those which raise up the peoples of the continents where colonization, under-development, exploitation and injustice have ruled for centuries.

b) This interior vision, capable of assimilating and understanding the specific dialectic of the evolution of the society and the interaction between the contradictions of this society (in the framework of the historical stage humanity is currently crossing) is not possible, and can be neither profound nor exact, if it is not the result of experience and endurance, of struggle simultaneously conducted on the ideological and practical scales. An authentic and clear vision, capable of discerning the truth of the nation at this historical stage, cannot be one emerging from a preconceived, ideological schema, forged outside of the framework of national realities. Neither can it be practical or realistic if it does not assimilate the ideological currents crossing the contemporary world, and if it is not inspired by the international revolutionary heritage. The narrow relationship between theory and practice, between general and specific laws of social evolutions, of which the Arab homeland has been the scene in the course of this stage

of national rebirth, was the fundamental criterion and the point of departure for the Ba'thist movement. Consequently, it is logical that principal preoccupation of this movement be the attempt to pick out the fundamental necessities and demands of the struggle conducted by the nation to recover its unity, its freedom, and to put itself back on the road to progress.

3. It is necessary to point that the Ba'thist ideology appeared as the expression of the necessities of an entire historical stage, while at the same time voicing the ambitions of the Arab nation. The Ba'th idea takes on an ideological dimension which goes beyond politics — a national dimension. It oversteps the artificial borders between the diverse Arab states, and finally shatters the framework of present reality in order to clear the path toward future evolution. Scarcely had this new ideology been elaborated —crystallizing itself around the idea of the dialectical unity of the Arab nations's struggle for its unity, its struggle for freedom, and its struggle for socialism —that it became an ideology which best corresponded to the demands of the current historical stage, constituting a common source from which the diverse forces of the Arab Revolution could draw their principles and theoretical foundations.

It was completely natural that this new ideology enter into conflict with the various political and intellectual currents which had preceded its birth, such as traditional non-socialist nationalism, reactionary theories, abstract internationalism, regionalist progressivism, etc.

The dialogue which went on between the new ideology —that of unity, freedom and socialism— and the currents of thought which still prevailed, were rather intense and drawn out. The militant thought could not keep itself from showing its disgust for those who were

content to turn the overwhelming circumstances through which the Arab nation was passing to their own advantage. The unitary spirit rejected the attitudes of those who accepted disunion, who resigned themselves to the artificial borders between the diverse regions of the homeland, and who even exploited this state of fact. The idea of national liberation disowned those who sought to dissociate the struggle against foreign enemies from that waged against the social ills which paralyzed the national will. The truly revolutionary thought was distinguished from that of the pseudo-revolutionaries, who sometimes adopted attitudes that made abstractions of colonialism, or who went so far as to enclose themselves in complacent silence, who adopted attitudes of favor and gave their approval to projects that in no way served the interests of the Arab states and the nation; Finally, in the course of this dialogue, the national thought could not keep itself from expressing its hostility toward the regionalist spirit, who transformed the disunion of the homeland into a durable state of fact, complete with its theoretical justifications and its own political philosophy, whereas, in reality, the principles it advanced only served to clear the way for the realization of projects hostile to Arab unity and to deceive public opinion by hiding from it the essence of the national problem.

Therefore, it was completely natural that this new ideology recommended by the Ba'th Party be the object of hostility coming from all parts, appearing in various forms and tendencies. It was also natural for the Ba'thist movement, since its creation, to be the victim of widespread defamation campaigns, the goal of which was to put up psychological obstacles between this emerging movement and the great number of intellectuals belonging to the generation which had grown up at the same time as the Ba'th. These campaigns aimed at making it impossible for these intellectuals to have any

relation whatsoever with the Party, to assimilate its ideas, or even to become acquainted with its theories and principles, if only out of simple curiosity. As a result of these campaigns, the thought of the Ba'th remained ignored by those who had been led to adopt a hostile attitude in its regard and by those who had been political adversaries of the Ba'thist movement.

4. The thought of the Ba'th also seemed to carve out a separate path for itself, achieving a split with the current of predominant political ideas, separating itself completely from that current, making any contact or continuous exchange impossible. From this, the Ba'thist movement acquired a theoretical and ideological specificity and an organizational structure established on a national scale. As well as endowing it with a certain spirit of independence, these two characteristics distinguished it in its conception of problems as well as in the way it proposed to solve them. It is for this reason that the Ba'th seemed to constitute more of a current and totally independent political line than a simple phase of the current of the historical evolution of nationalist ideology in the Arab homeland.

This characteristic recognizes a truly revolutionary attitude, and one which is particular to the Ba'th. Professor Michel 'Aflaq expressed this well in the speech he gave at the moment of the Syrian-Egyptian fusion of 1958, in which he made a brief historical reference to the role played by the Party in national life from the time of its founding up until the proclamation of the United Arab Republic:

«The creation of the Ba'th Party had been a genuine revolution in the history of the Arab nation. It is a revolution in the sense that the Ba'thist movement was not an extension of what had existed beforehand, but rather, it was, in a certain manner, a split, a wilful and

conscious amputation, as well as an ascension to a level never before reached in the realm of thought, morale or psychology, despite all its weaknesses, shortcomings, and gaps. (*On the Way of the Ba'th*, Fi Sabîl al-Ba'th, Seventh edition, p. 275).

But these characteristics were not the only advantages for the Ba'th. On the contrary, they led the Party to assume the greatest share of the responsibilities and... of the sufferings implied in the struggle against the after-effects of the past, in order to clear the path toward renewal and toward the future. Various sorts of injustices then came down upon it. The perpetrators of these were not only those who disagreed with the Ba'thist idea, but also those who were of its school, and even certain militants of the Party who were not at the level of the tasks demanded of them, who were incapable of remaining faithful to their commitments and finally who, in order to better hide their opportunism, their weakness or their despotism, borrowed ideological weapons. The Ba'thist movement was intractable and unrelenting, both with itself and with others. In this context, it proceeded in the same way used by those who acted according to revolutionary criteria. The Ba'thists had contempt for compromise and knew nothing of complacency and respite. They practiced both critique and self-critique in their most complete forms, rebelling against any attempt at encirclement, revolting against falsification, struggling against oppression, and carving a path for themselves and their sufferings, amid the permanent open war against the Ba'th —as an idea and as a person— and against the Ba'thist leadership. In addition, the ideology of the Party still suffered from the consequences of the injustice it had undergone. This injustice appeared under various forms and manifestations. It was expressed in the following attitudes:

— the attitude of those who, in regard to the Ba'th, displayed an overt and emotional hostility, rejecting the experience of the Party with neither reflection nor previous examination.

— the attitude of those who misunderstood, were unaware of, or refused to become acquainted with the Ba'th.

— the attitude of those who were satisfied with the superficial impressions they had formed on the subject of the Ba'th, with no rational analysis.

— finally, the attitude of those who chose to lead their offensive against the Ba'th, perpetrating attacks against it which had absolutely no objective justification.

The more these attitudes were removed from all objectivity and were sometimes even deceitful, with contempt for all faithfulness to the truth, the more the Ba'th, since its creation, affirmed itself as a current of thought which addressed itself above all to a search for the truth. It is the quality which distinguishes it from all other movements and endows it with its particular characteristics. This same quality, however, loads it with heavy responsibilities and difficult tasks: the arduous struggle against the currents of thought which presented the Arab cause in an erroneous, falsified, superficial and fragmented manner. In other words, the Ba'th Party had to confront the difficulties that emerged from its search for the truth and the bitterness of their struggle, in order to isolate this truth, to defend it, and to watch that it was firmly rooted in reality. Thus, the idea of the Ba'th, even in the heart of the political movement carrying its name, had taken on the function of a judge and a censor who endlessly watched over, who criticized attitudes, manners of behavior, and forms of activity in order to judge their distance or their nearness to criteria which spring from that very system of thought and also to judge

the commitment, on the part of the militants, to always adhere to its criteria.

5. The practical difficulties encountered by the Ba'th when setting up its structure, those born of its evolution as a political movement and of its relation with other forces, currents and tendencies, were reflected in the very thought of the Party. This thought underwent the negative consequences which had sprung from certain problems, most important among them being, the first stage, that of its relations with the Arab communist parties in the course of the Stalinist era. The relations that the Ba'th had with President Nasser and the Nasserist current were no less problematic. The Party was then obliged to struggle against the regionalist tendency which stood in its very ranks, as well as against those who attempted to monopolize decision-making powers in its ranks in order to make it the mere shadow of a military and bureaucratic regionalist regime, while the vocation of the Ba'th is to be an historic, popular and militant movement. Thus, during certain phases, the thought of the Ba'th was obliged to recant and confine itself within the limits of the political movement to which it had given birth. It suffered the consequences of the crises which tore the movement apart, whether in the area of external relations with other political forces present on the scene, or in that of internal relations with the elements and groups that used power as a weapon to sabotage the Party.

6. The thought of the Ba'th determined the nature and form that the revolutionary movement of the same name had to take. It isolated the necessity of the realization of the following fundamental conditions:

— This revolutionary movement must start from a totally Arab ideology, built on the three principal axes: freedom, socialism, and Arab unity;



— This movement must be armed with ethics inspired by a progressive and liberating vision, adhering again to the eternal values of humanity, i. e., a vision in which there is no contradiction between the end and the means;

— This movement must avoid immobility and theoretical formalism, as well as all tendencies toward abstraction;

— This movement must be a microcosm of the future Arab society;

— Militancy must be the rule which governs the movement in a permanent and stable manner.

The thirty years that have just passed were the stage for a permanent struggle between aspirations and reality. Arab revolutionary ideology attempted, through this struggle, to prove the depth of the ties between nationalist, socialist and liberating concepts, advanced by the Ba'th, and the necessities of the revolutionary stage through which the Arab nation was passing. The Ba'th also revealed the backwardness of present institutions and structures and their inaptitude at rising to the level of the demands of the Ba'thist militant thought. This thought, in the eyes of those who tried to assimilate and undertake a profound analysis of it, appeared as a disconcerting phenomenon. What was affirmed a third of a century ago is, in fact, still valuable and could be said today. Those who believe that the thought of the Ba'th already belongs to the past, can recognize that in reality it continues to be a thought turned toward and adapting to the future. Thus it proves that it still remains poorly known, not having had the attention which it deserves and which would be commensurate with its importance. It continues to be a victim of the same serious injustices which it never ceased to suffer in the past, and which are only one part of the many conspiracies plotted against the party that has known

how to clear the way for the contemporary Arab rebirth.

If this introduction has permitted us to isolate the particularities of the ideological position of the Ba'th Party, this position characterized by the complete absence of any schema or preconceived intellectual mold, which objectively searches the truth, the truth of the nation, and which knows how to remain faithful to this truth — this attitude engaged in the struggle and adhering to a militant ethic, showing proof of a profound understanding of man and of human civilization— we must at this time identify the dimensions of the new revolutionary vision of the Arab situation contained in the ideology of the Ba'th. We must define the means required for the realization of the objectives which this ideology advocates, as well as the strategy which must be adopted for revolutionary action necessitated by the current historical stage.

### *A New Revolutionary Vision*

1. Because it knew how to give priority to the nationalist fact (on the basis of its essentially human and secular aspects), the Ba'th conferred a vigour on its own ideology in such a way that the two theories that prevailed before its existence (the anti-nationalist theory of the Left, as well as the anti-nationalist theory of the Right, each with its own negative conception of Arab nationalism) were surpassed.

2. The Ba'th also insisted on the necessity of safeguarding the unity of the Arab personality and on the preservation of its independence. The putting into question of the present reality implies a revolutionary vision, conscious of the historical continuity particular to the Arabs and of the specificity of their future. The current

contradictions could not be appreciated in all their depth unless one understood their roots, and the future could not be in harmony with the national aspirations unless it was placed in the framework of a destiny that scientifically and realistically links all the temporal dimensions of Arab national life determined by the laws of history. These considerations led the Ba'th to consider Arab unity and the Palestinian cause as the two principal incentives for its action. Their importance is paramount for the Arab revolution, for the national life and for the future of Arabs in general.

3. The Ba'th took care to purify the Arab national idea, eliminating all racial conceptions, all chauvinistic, fanatic and retrograde tendencies, and in opposing the non-socialist nationalist theory, this abstract vision, which from the exterior attempted to impose unrelated schemas for the problems of the nation, in particular those schemas inspired by western theories. It is in establishing solid links between nationalism and the necessities of the present historical stage (taking into full account the demands of modern life), that the Ba'th succeeded in bringing this important theoretical task to its completion. It knew how to furnish an accurate analysis of the multiple aspects of the struggle, as well as of the contradictions in the national Arab life and in the world of that moment in general. It succeeded in asserting a new vision, a different and truly revolutionary vision of Arab nationalism, which went beyond all the bourgeois and petty bourgeois concepts, by considering this aspect as the principal motivation of the struggle in the Arab national life at the historical stage through which it is passing at that moment.

Bourgeois ideology rejects socialism. It is ready for any compromise as far as the liberation of the homeland is concerned. It considers unity to be a simple operation of co-ordination among the various Arab regions and

among the various regional institutions. It corresponds perfectly to the aspirations of its clientele, the bourgeois class, which accepts and relies on the collaboration of classes in order to perpetuate its own political power, to safeguard its own interests and privileges, and to maintain the existing social structures, for the purpose of immortalizing the situation and values of the moment. Doing this, it fights against all the ideas, all the currents and all the forms of activity oriented toward the future, resolved to hasten the evolution and to open the way toward renewal. It also found fault with any form of criticism capable of condemning the economic and moral bases (exploitation and oppression) on which the bourgeois class implants its power. Finally, it orchestrated an enormous propaganda campaign that aimed at undermining all the unitary and socialist revolutionary thought.

The petty bourgeoisie also has an ideology which reflects both its particular interests and its heterogeneous structures. Its aspirations are double although contradictory. Although appearing to be unitary, its convictions are essentially regionalist. Despite its socialist slogans, it turned out to be hostile to the working class to which it refused to accomplish any effective role. It rejected the idea of submitting its commands to the power of workers and gave no credit whatsoever to the popular masses and to their revolutionary potential, the only one capable of transforming the force of history. Its fundamental attitude was elitist and its spirit was bureaucratic. It only aimed at realizing the interests of its petty-bourgeois leaders and constituted an obstacle to the stirring up of the popular revolutionary potentialities, preventing the working class from participating in an effective and concrete way in political decision-making. This ideology is only verbally socialist. It only struggles for liberation in a formal way. It is actually only a pseudo-unitary ideology.

On the other hand, the revolutionary conception of Arab nationalism allies the unitary spirit to liberation and socialism. It founds its theory on the idea that the national Arab cause is one and indivisible. For it, the struggle for unity, liberation and socialism is one, and the supreme objectives of unity, freedom and socialism are dialectically inseparable. This conception of Arab nationalism takes into account the concrete present realities: under-development, the disunion of the homeland, colonialism, Zionism and class exploitation. It moved from a vision of the whole which encompassed all the aspects of the problems in question and the concrete givens of the Arab society at that current stage, raising up against under-development in all its forms, against disunion, exploitation and oppression. It shows the causes of these and seeks to transform current social structures by trying to grasp the negative factors which have caused the Arab nation to lose its authentic identity. It then tries to restore this identity by relying on the concept of unity, on militant action, and on the perspective of an ambitious, historical mission.

This revolutionary theory was developed in a particular and new historical context which it knows how to evaluate. This context can only be understood by reference to nationalist experiences (and to the nationalist experiences which sprang from them), and which expressed totally different historical realities of the Arab situation. Thus, the nationalist experiences undergone in Europe, particularly in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries and at the beginning of the 20th, are in no way comparable to the Arab nationalist experience.

In a word, this revolutionary conception of Arab nationalism is the ideological expression of the experience of the Arab nation which militates for the resolution of the alienating contradictions for the Arab man and for the Arab masses. It is at the same time, a nationalist

conception and a class conception, in which the idea of the nation finds itself closely linked to the realities, needs and potential of the revolutionary, proletarian masses directed by the Arab working class.

4. The ideology of the Ba'th rejects any idea of partial reform. The present contradictions in under-developed societies have risen to such an acute level that reason is no longer able to master them. They are intolerable, from both a logical and an ethical point of view, and any partial reform will remain insignificant since it would have no impact on these contradictions. In fact, the alliance of colonialist, Zionist and reactionaries constitutes a force capable of containing these reforms, capables of orienting them according to its projects and interests. In the face of this reality, the Ba'th works toward deepening the revolutionary nature of Arab nationalism and the revolutionary character of the struggle of the Arab nation. This struggle must condemn and reject the apparent logic of partial reformism, and superficial solutions which either ignore objective conditions or else adopt a defeatist attitude with regard to these conditions. Adopting a revolutionary vision is the prerequisite condition for being able to assume what is implied by membership in Arab nationalism.

5. Ba'thist ideology rejects all chauvinist tendencies which characterize the nationalist experiences undergone in the West by the bourgeoisie. It considers Arab nationalism to be a movement of liberation directed against colonialism as a profoundly human experience which quite naturally rejoins the currents of liberation in revolt against colonialism and the evils which flow from it: fanaticism, tyranny and injustice.

6. Ba'thist ideology considers: «the struggle for the liberation of the nation, the struggle against under-development and the struggle for the resolution of the contradictions which confer an appearance on the Arab

nation contrary to its profound essence», as a struggle moving in the direction of history. As Professor Michel 'Aflaq has said: «Our epoch is that of the popular masses, that of the masses of Asia and Africa who have endured the most striking human experience, having suffered from servitude and injustice imposed on them from the interior as well as from the exterior».

7. The Ba'thist revolutionary approach to the contemporary Arab reality proceeds on the one hand from an analysis of the past, from the coming to awareness of the socio-cultural Arab heritage and, on the other hand, from an analysis of the present and of the contradictions which dominate it. Concern for the future prepared by the Arab revolution is also a fundamental priority. Alignment must be taken in complete recognition of «the needs of the nation, expressed in complete freedom. In fact, in proportion to the reduction of constraints, we will witness the growth of the nation's capacities for being in harmony with itself, for remaining faithful to its particular personality, to its unique spirit and, consequently, for preparing its future».

8. According to the revolutionary perspective of Arab nationalism, progressivism signifies «a recommencement of the nation in the living and revolutionary sense of the history of this nation. The function of progressivism is to liberate the nation from the constraints and negative consequences of the past which still overwhelm it and which have been accumulated and multiplied in the course of the long period of immobility which the nation has known. Progressivism is also the act of regaining through the struggle a free and creative spirit permitting the recovery and formation of our new, unique identity». (*The Ba'th's Struggle*, Nidhal-l-Ba'th, Volume II, p. 40). It is in moving from these perspectives that the new revolutionary perspective affirms that the reaction cons-

titutes «a double treason of the nation, an attack on its past and on its future».

9. This theory of Arab nationalism considers that the revolutions of the past give too great an importance to subjective factors, whereas the contemporary revolutions insist too greatly on objective factors. Revolutionary theory should permit the realization of a balance between these two tendencies and should rely on a dialectical, exhaustive and harmonious conception. The dialectical links should not be considered abstractly, outside of concrete realities which they put into relation and any general and universal law must be capable of being applied to the living and specific situation of the historical stage with which they are concerned. Such is the foundation of the Arab revolutionary theory. Here, also, it is not a question of being content with denouncing external factors responsible for disunion, underdevelopment, exploitation and oppression. Such an attitude could lead us to self-satisfaction which would bring about a deformed and superficial vision of the national cause. It would also be the mark of our inability for carrying out self-criticism and for assuming our historic responsibilities. It is for this reason that Michel 'Aflaq declared in 1955, «Arabs should stop looking for pretexts, they should stop shirking their responsibilities by accusing colonialism of being the unique cause of their present situation. They should deeply investigate their problems from the inside, considering themselves, in the first and last instance, as the only ones responsible for their destiny».

10. This new revolutionary vision stresses «the difference between *our* conception of nationalism and the traditional conceptions», (*On the Way of the Ba'th*, Fi Sabil-l-Ba'th), because it «is foreign to fanatical conceptions engendered by colonialism, foreign to tribal professions of faith, who have no other function than to



consolidate colonialism on our soil. It is attentive not to fall into the traps of immobility, opposed to any glorification of origins, whether social or racial, and profoundly human. The respect of this conception goes so far as to revere the national and human sentiments of all people».

11. The Ba'th also distinguishes itself by the manner in which it approaches the past. In the work cited above, Michel 'Aflaq writes, «there is, in our national history, an event of extreme importance: the appearance of Islam. This is an event of national, as well as of universal significance, one of the most important experiences of humanity. Islam, at its origin, was a revolutionary movement, an uprising against a certain state of facts, marked by well determined beliefs, traditions and interests. Any revolutionary situation is one and indivisible. It demands the same psycho-social conditions and, to a large degree the same objective conditions. It is therefore logical that this revolutionary generation, this generation of men who rise up against decadent traditions, be that, which, by its spirit, is closest to Islam; it is the generation most likely to understand it, be enthusiastic about it, and answer its call».

Such an analysis of the past implies a revolutionary conception of religion in general. According to the Ba'thist criteria, «there can be no religion alongside corruption, iniquity and exploitation; a true religion is always on the side of the victims of injustice and those who revolt against corruption».

12. According to the Ba'th, the Arab revolutionary theory «necessitates a global vision and analysis of the national and international situations. It implies a high degree of struggle and revolutionary spirit that rejects half-solutions, and partial sacrifices and that knows nothing of lassitude». It is on the basis of these criteria that one can also determine the degree of affinity

with the Arab nation, this nation which is, as Michel 'Aflaq has said, «in the process of realization, in the smallest portion of the homeland where a struggle is going on and especially, of course, when this struggle is confronting death at every moment». In addition, these criteria enable one to recognize the real men in the heart of Arab society. Michel 'Aflaq continues in this same work, saying, «The man who confronts death is a real man, since at the very moment when he is struggling against destiny he can discover the absurdity of all the causes of the constraints imprisoning him —fanaticism in all its forms, and privileges— since death shows all that is artificial...» The author concludes by affirming that the armed struggle is the genuine sign of the vitality of the Arab nation: «Our nation is found wherever its sons carry arms». This affirmation dating from 1959, explains the nature of certain methods of action employed in the name of the revolution and of militantism, far from corresponding to the actual content of the Ba'thist ideology.

13. The new Arab revolutionary theory springs from a dialectical conception of the relationships among the national struggle for unity, social struggles and the class struggle. The connections among these forms of struggles are crucial to the present historical stage and the working class is the social group that incarnates these dialectical connections. «If there is a class which more than any other is ready to liberate itself from the control of particular interests and privileges, as well as from the mental legacy of disunion, a class capable of concretizing the unity of the Arab cause in theory and in the struggle, this can only be the class of Arab workers, in particular, and all the proletarian Arab masses, in general, since these popular masses are daily confronted with this striking reality: their enemies are, at the same time, those of the entire Arab nation». (op. cit. p. 314).

Thus, the links between the national combat and social struggles constitute one of the foundation of this new revolutionary theory: «In the struggle that we are conducting for the indivisible Arab national cause, we do not dissociate socio-economic questions from national ones, since this cause cannot be victorious unless we safeguard its unity». (op. cit., p. 314).

These links between national problems and problems of class can only be concretely established by the struggle and in its context, since the problem, as our author affirms, «is not at all an easy one we must develop and nurture the tension between the opposing forces, and take care that the national idea is not lost in confusing itself with the interests of the criminal classes, when these exploiters of privilege adopt a nationalist phraseology in order to better conceal their lies and intentions». (op. cit. p. 322).

Therefore, these relationships between problems of class are elucidated thanks to this ideological perspective according to which the national problem constitutes an indivisible whole. The class struggle is only one aspect of the problem, which is itself wider and deeper. «This is the problem posed by a divided homeland, of which certain regions are still under colonial domination. Disunion is the greatest obstacle to the rebirth of this homeland. The problem is also one posed by a homeland, under-developed in all ways: intellectual, economic, etc. In this homeland, all must be reconstructed». (op. cit. p. 322). This form of analysis proceeds from a wholistic vision of the problems particular to the third world in its entirety, this geographical entity, where not only social classes, but also entire nations are oppressed, as Michel 'Aflaq explains in *The Battle of the Unique Destiny* (Ma'rakat al-masâr al wâkid, p. 50).

14. This new revolutionary theory also defined the rules for militant action and determined the criteria for

judging its orientation. It took pains to place stress on the unity among revolutionary theory, strategy and tactics, as well as the unity between ideology and organization, or between the objectives and their mode of application in the course of each stage in question: «What we want for our nation in the decades to come should appear and take form from this moment on in militant action. If, from the beginning, the militants do not grasp those values that lead to overthrow, it seems completely improbable to us that they would be able to achieve it once they had taken power. Power and authority, instead of raising souls to the level of these values tend to corrupt and weaken them». (op. cit. p. 65).

The new revolutionary theory also defined the framework of the struggle, its criteria and the levels on which it should unfold. According to this theory: «The Arabs are crossing a historical stage where right and freedom follow them like an inevitable destiny. This stage of the struggle is an experience of a new kind. It is not only a way of putting our capabilities for liberating ourselves from the colonialist yoke to the test, but also a way of testing our ability for further questioning our present situation, as well as our ethical and intellectual criteria. Our essential preoccupation is for victory in the battle against colonialism, without in the course of this task having to renounce any of our national or human aspirations and without altering or degrading our souls or spirits. In addition, it is thanks to an unswerving loyalty to our aspirations and to the will of preserving our uniqueness that this battle will owe its victory». (*Battle of the Unique Destiny*, p. 90).

15. This new theory has conceived a new approach to the notion of time by drawing its sources from the concept of the revolution itself. In fact, the revolution is a determining process which tolerates no artifice, mysti-

fication or superficiality. Like life itself, it has natural laws and to be deceitful with time is to be deceitful with life. The consequences of such an attitude can only be harmful. For the Arabs, then, it was essential in this new revolutionary perspective that they «should arrive at a serious and ardent life...» If they Arabs had to choose between realizing their objectives with the hoiest possible delay «by counting on forces other than their own, and «between continuing the revolution, a revolution oriented toward the future and drawing its inspiration from their social realities, their needs and the idea they have of man and of life (even if the realization of their objectives is then delayed for several years or more»), they should make their choice according to the conceptions of the Ba'th: «Choose the longest path in order to be able to preserve certain fundamental values in the process». (op. cit. p. 22. 129).

16. The theory of the Ba'th is defined «as a positive theory that always finishes by isolating positive truths». (*On the Way of the Ba'th*, p. 214). The Ba'th idea of nationalism goes according to a number of these truths: «The positive idea of nationalism that we have developed is the following: we consider that nationalism is the degree of maturity attained by human societies when over the centuries the individuals composing these societies evolved in interaction with their particular natural and historical conditions. Centuries of interaction have woven common spiritual links among these individuals; the most important and profound of these is the cultural link». (*The Battle of the Unique Destiny*, p. 145).

17. This new revolutionary theory has succeeded in proving the necessity for a new revolutionary movement, situated at a different level than that of earlier movements, since it expresses the needs of the nation by proposing radical solutions to its problems. This movement rests on an authentic theory drawn from the very

sources of the nation and benefitting from extensive experience. The Party was born of the need, felt by the nation, for dealing with problems of the Arab homeland in a total and radical way, also springing from the recognition of a fundamental principle according to which this homeland constitutes an indivisible whole and the people who dwell in it constitute a nation». (*The Battle of the Unique Destiny*, p. 139).

18. This revolutionary theory is also defined in these terms: «In the course of recent years, the Arab nation has clearly made progress on the way toward revolution and rebirth... The essential reason for this progress has been the elaboration of a new conception of national Arab action. This conception is not yet precise enough and organizes to the point of being presented as a well established theory. Nevertheless, we can give a rough view of its contents on the basis of two key ideas: the fact, on the one hand, of reliance only on the people, the popular masses being the only effective revolutionary force; and on the other hand, the fact of considering the Arab nation as an indivisible whole». (op. cit. p. 185). Thanks to these principles, Arab nationalism has become synonymous with revolt against under-development, disunion and social injustice, synonymous with the struggle for unification, liberation, and modernization of the Arab homeland and a necessary condition for the introduction of democratic and humanist values into national life.

### Chapter III

## Ideological challenges today and evolutionary trends

In his writings published after the June defeat, the founder of the Ba'th Party, M. 'Aflaq, stated:

«The latest historical phase can almost be equated with a new revolution, a re-founding of the Party. A total and profound remodelling of its concepts, its ideology, its struggle and the prospects of its struggle has been completed. It is up to the Party's militants, as well as all the other Arab militants, to find a new mode of action that is genuinely different from that of the past. Its grasp of reality must be stronger, its aims more ambitious; it must be able to take full advantage of the potential, the capacities and the latent potential of our nation which, for the last two decades, have only partly been tapped.» (*Point of Departure*, Noqtat-Al-bidâya, Second Edition, p. 119).

The Arab revolutionary movement must today be capable of facing two types of ideological challenge:

1. *Subjective, internal challenges*: they have been evoked in the numerous self-criticisms that have marked the progression of revolutionary ideology. Thanks to these self-criticisms, the weaknesses and deficiencies as

well as the various aspects of under-development within the movement have been pinpointed.

2. *Objective, external challenges*: these are comprised of the present situation of the Arab struggle and its capacity to assume and go beyond the disaster the nation was subjected to on June 5, 1967. Given this state of affairs, it is necessary to understand the demands of the Arab revolutionary struggle from both the ideological and the practical point of view.

Let us now examine in more detail these two types of challenge.

### 1. *Subjective, internal challenges*

As we mentioned, there was a growing number of attempts to criticize ideological tenets. This healthy process, which characterizes the contemporary Arab revolution, allowed for a clearer definition of the errors and insufficiencies in various aspects of Arab ideology.

As early as 1950, M. 'Aflaq wrote in an article entitled «The Global Ideological Movement» (in *On the Ba'th Path*, Seventh Edition, p. 34): «The Arab renaissance movement cannot do without a general philosophy of life, for it is a national liberation movement, a progressive movement, and therefore a movement marked by the profoundness of its views and its system of human values. It must necessarily be endowed with an ethical system and a general philosophical theory on man and the world».

Ten years later, in 1960, the author presented in «The Historical Perspectives of the Ba'th Movement», a retrospective analysis of the previous phase with its gains and insufficiencies: «It remains for us to say that the Party's efforts are still unsatisfactory as concerns methodical socialist investigations. In effect, the Party



has not succeeded in elaborating a precise and detailed theory. In the years following its founding, the Party was content to affirm the principle of independence and the specific nature of the Arab road to socialism. But we should have gone beyond this elementary stage so that our ideology could evolve; by learning from other countries' experiences, we should have broadened and enriched our ideology. This is one of the essential tasks facing the Ba'thist militants in the immediate future». (*On the Ba'th Path*, Seventh Edition, p. 54). In 1969, after the June defeat, comrade 'Aflaq tried to define the fundamental causes behind the June defeat —the ills, the weak points and insufficiencies of that period: «What prevented the Arab revolution from coming to full flower, from attaining its goals in a wholly satisfactory manner, is that its conception of the people and the role of the proletariat, and particularly of the working class, is incorrect. That is the cause of our ills. Curing these ills will constitute a new point of departure, which will give fresh impetus to the revolutionary task of rejuvenation on the scale of the entire Arab homeland». (*Point of Departure*, Second Edition, p. 125).

In 1970, the Secretary General of the Party gave the following résumé of his views on the Ba'th Party's accomplishments during the thirty years of its existence:

«Thirty years after the founding of our Party, I can say that it is the only movement in the Arab homeland to have succeeded in envisioning the future in a clear way. It is also the only movement to have succeeded in creating the basis for a militant Arab action of historical dimensions that is capable of resisting and persisting in the pursuit of all the aims of a contemporary Arab revolution... Nevertheless, to preserve the Party and to ensure that it reaches its goals —which are those of the entire Arab nation— it must remain faithful unto itself, forever in close touch with its ideological wellsprings and

its original determination. Let it put itself into question; let it from time to time make a tour or inspection to measure the distance that may have grown up between itself and its own principles and determination. If necessary, it can then regain control». (*Point of Departure*, Second Edition, p. 157)

But if one wants to make Arab revolutionary ideology evolve so that its impact on the course of the Revolution will be even greater, then one must add to this first process a second, which is designed to grasp the nature of objective, external challenges. What exactly are these challenges?

## 2. *Objective, external challenges*

The challenge that Arab revolutionary thought must face before any other is that provided by the imperialist-Zionist forces. Endowed with the most up-to-date technology and a tremendous potential, these forces are fighting the Arab cause with formidable efficiency and according to well thought-out plans. Their aim is to deaden the vitality of the Arab revolution, wherever it shows itself, and to spread despair and a defeatist attitude or, in other words, to create a climate favourable to its own ends.

The second challenge is presented by the present political situation of the various Arab regimes, as well as by the forms of militant action, be they those of patriotic forces, progressive groups, those working for national liberation, the revolutionary forces in their entirety or the Palestinian Resistance movement. These regimes and militant forces are at present in a precarious situation created by the various weaknesses, deviations or ills that have nagged them. The essential points are as follows:

a) The imperialist-Zionist alliance has succeeded, in the name of common interests, in winning over to its

cause a certain number of Arab regimes. Because of this, gigantic riches are now in the hands of reactionary regimes and are at the disposal of the nation's enemies. Moreover, the manoeuvring and plotting of the reactionary forces —a direct consequence of regimes that are imperialist satellites— has created a cancer that is spreading through the body of the Arab nation.

b) Certain non-reactionary regimes put small confidence in their people and, as a result, are weakened and hesitant and lack confidence in themselves. The imperialist-Zionist alliance takes advantage of the situation and maintains a permanent state of fear by playing up the difference between the forces it can command and the forces with which these regimes can oppose it. It raises all kinds of obstacles to stop these regimes from uniting, from drawing closer to one another, from quitting their isolation to overcome regional differences.

c) The damage done by disunity constantly hinders relations among the progressive, patriotic forces, the various sectors of the Arab Revolution and the Palestinian Revolutionary movement. Though all are conscious of the mistakes made during the period preceding the June defeat and although they all have given directives to undertake common action and to form a common front, they have succeeded only partially in creating genuine patriotic fronts on either a regional or national scale. And yet the strategic demands of the Arab revolution require that just such a front be established.

d) Today's militant suffers from a split personality, a kind of psychological atomization. This is unquestionably a syndrome of the malady now crippling Arab militancy; it is nothing other than the continuing gap between theory and practise, between ambitions and desires on the one hand and aptness and capabilities on the other. The causes are diverse: some stem from the class origin of the leaders of the revolutionary movement; others are of a

socio-cultural nature and arise from the general state of underdevelopment in our countries. There is also an external, coercive cause: the Arab nation is confronted with modern enemy forces that are determined to defend their interests and whose fierce ambition is diametrically opposed to the conditions necessary to bring about an Arab renaissance and to the vital needs of this nation, which must unite, liberate itself and institute socialism.

It is evident that the Arab Revolution is now going through a crucial phase in its evolution; it is at an historic crossroads. If there exists an effective answer to all the present ideological challenges, if there is a way to make the positive elements in our nation operative at this crucial stage, then it can only come from a return to the original sources of Arab Revolutionary ideology, along the lines defined by the founder of the Party:

«Militant struggle is the only way to make ideology evolve. It is through this struggle that we can acquire a profound and authentic revolutionary vision. At the present stage, the revolutionary struggle can only be led by revolutionary forces, for they are capable of being the junction-point between ideology and the people it addresses itself to: the armed proletarian masses».

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## Chapter IV

# The militant experience of the Arab and Socialist Ba'th Party

If we attempt to describe and evaluate those militant experiences that have most strongly marked the Arab liberation movement, it is because we hope to learn something from them and, as a natural consequence, forge means to pursue our struggle. As we try to situate the Ba'th experiences in their historical context and to ascribe to the Party its correct place in the stage the Arab nation is presently going through, we must always have uppermost in our minds a basic truth: the Arab political parties all share certain common traits. All through the last fifty years, the various parties have led an introverted existence, shut up in their own universe and refusing to recognize the others. Each boasted that its views were the most synthetic; each threw the responsibility for mistakes on the others' shoulders; and all obstinately and categorically refused any self-criticism whatsoever. The various sectors of the Arab revolutionary movement thus lived quite apart one from the other, they mutually ignored one another and entered into prejudicial competition. This state of affairs continued until the June defeat. All the militant forces in the Arab homeland then found themselves in an anguished self-confrontation, for they were faced with the responsibility

for their own future and that of the nation and were forced to question the very reasons for their existence.

Our Party, the PBAS, was one of those militant forces that participated in the elaboration of the next stage, with all its mistakes and successes. As always, this party attempted to draw the lesson from the preceding stage: the affirmation of the national progressive ideology in the '40s; the lesson of the 1950's, when the struggles of the rising popular movement culminated in the Syrian-Egyptian fusion of 1958; that of the victory of the Algerian revolution in the early '60s; the lesson to be drawn from the secession of the Syrian province which brought about the dismembering of the United Arab Republic and which was accompanied by a sharp rise in the number of plots against the Arab revolutionary movement and by the atomization of combative forces; then, the beginning of a period of intestine struggle within the revolutionary movements and conflicts that set one movement against another... up to the national catastrophe in 1967. During this stage, our Party was one of the militant elements in the movement; it helped, along with others, to push the struggle forward, but it was also responsible for a certain number of mistakes. The events that occurred during the preceding stage (especially from 1948 onwards) and which ended in the defeat of June 1967 constitute one of the tragic phases of this period of conception and birth in which the Arab Revolution still finds itself ever since it began the struggle against itself and the outer world a half-century ago. The failure to meet the challenge thrown out by the imperialists, Zionists and reactionaries turned the June defeat into the point of departure for a complete reappraisal —ineluctable, radical and global. This general questioning is necessary to begin a new stage in the struggle, which will be different in quality from the preceding stages.

For the Ba'th Party, the June defeat constitutes a veritable turning point: it marks the separation of two stages, the first characterised by the birth of the Arab revolutionary ideology, and the second, that is now beginning, which must forge a tool adequate for this ideology. This stage will be one of a more mature strategy, which will allow us to avoid setbacks and to mobilise all the revolutionary forces in the homeland so as to meet the imperialist, Zionist and reactionary challenge.

By making this distinction, the Ba'th could determine the degree of revolutionary militancy required by the new stage as compared with the previous stage, in which militancy proved inadequate to accomplish the assigned tasks and even played a part in the preparation of the defeat.

The Ba'th also realised that «June 5» opened the way for an attack on all political structures, institutions and systems so as to uncover and denounce all the remaining sequels of the previous stage. The greater part of the ideas, systems of organisation and methods of action proved to be out-of-date: the nation at large had passed judgment on them, and their decision was final. As the new stage began, the positive elements in the various systems were put to the test: it was then that representatives were judged capable or not of evolving and of rising to the occasion.

During the new stage, the Ba'th claimed to have put a stop to certain forms of revolutionary action characterised by a tendency towards regionalism, bureaucracy and an élitist mentality. These forms of action, by distorting political organisations and the trade unions, hampered popular action. In the end, they showed themselves to be a kind of conspiracy against democracy and Arab unity.

The June defeat also put an end to a certain type of

attitude current in the Arab political parties that consisted in introversion, a negative approach to problems and immobility. The parties and militants were stuck in a rut, yet full of their own importance. They behaved emotionally and reacted before thinking things out. When they undertook action, they were like a pilot «flying by the seat of his pants»: there was no attempt at objective analysis or planning. Their main function, in fact, was limited to sowing discord within the ranks of the Arab revolutionary forces. They let contradictions of secondary importance obscure their vision to such a point that they were blinded to the main conflict, which opposes them all to the external enemy.

This was the gist of the Ba'th Party's position during its IX National Congress held eight months after the June defeat; the Party presented a severe and far-reaching criticism, something unheard of before the June 5, 1967 defeat. This allowed the party to clearly define the conditions necessary for a re-birth of the Arab revolutionary movement and to elaborate a common strategy for action within fronts as well as for an armed popular struggle throughout the entire Arab homeland.

In the light of these analyses (begun in 1967 and developed in the report of the X National Congress in 1970), the Ba'th tried to draw the main lessons, as they were revealed by the June events, of a third-century of struggle. A sense of responsibility must be put ahead of all else. Sincerity —with oneself and with the people— and truth must come first, for that is the only way to halt the process of degeneration that is undermining the life of the political parties and the revolution, and which played so crucial a role in preparing for the national catastrophe of June.

In a speech which he gave a few days after the defeat in June 1967, the founder of the Ba'th Party, comrade 'Aflaq states:



«If we have come to the decision to begin the struggle again on new revolutionary bases which will not let past errors take hold, then we must study and analyse those errors and bad habits that occurred repeatedly over the last decade or two. As they grew larger and multiplied, they took their toll of the living forces within the Arab struggle, corrosively attacking it from within, while everyone stood by unconcernedly or without even being aware of what was happening. The people must know the truth, for logically they are the only hope and the only way to correct the errors of the past and to prepare a new revolutionary impetus, no longer prone to error.» (*Point of Departure*, First Edition, p. 43)

Having thus defined the demands of the new stage, our party felt that it «cannot continue to play an historic role after the setbacks and the catastrophe that shook the Arab nation until it reaffirms its *raison d'être* as an historic movement working for long-term goals; until its militants make its cause, as well as the Arab cause, a question of life or death; until they accept death because it guarantees the renaissance of the Party and its effectiveness as a historical force within the contemporary Arab revolution». (op. cit., First Edition, p. 48)

But what is the historic role the Ba'th must play? What is the *raison d'être* of the party? How can one sum up its militant experience? Lastly, what is the significance of this experience at this stage in the life of the nation, after all the ideological and practical struggles it lived through, and what results can it claim?

Before answering these questions, certain points must be cleared up. False information has circulated about the Ba'th Party, which has distorted its image since its founding over thirty years ago. From the point of view of ideology and organisation, our Party has always been in the avant-garde; at times it played a decisive and effective part in the preparation of the most important

events in contemporary Arab history; its name is already associated with several regional and national accomplishments of the first order. Nonetheless several factors contributed to deforming its image, primarily because attention was focussed exclusively on the crises that shook the party and on the mistakes and weaknesses it was sometimes prone to. In this way, one could call attention to the fact that the Ba'th was not able to elaborate a plan for the stage that followed the Syrian secession from the U.A.R. (such a plan would have proved that the Ba'th had a clear and practical grasp of the situation); that it took power prematurely; the fact that it did not give Egypt the rightful place such a large country should have within the Arab homeland; that it maintained tense relations with the Arab communist parties and other national forces for quite some time; the fact that it did not put into practise its otherwise correct conception of the Palestinian problem, and so forth.

But these mistakes hardly weigh in the balance when compared with the plans directed against the Arab Revolution, which were extremely prejudicial to the Ba'th movement. These plans were a dominant element in the development of conspiracies against the party; they aimed to split the movement and to raise psychological obstacles between its ideology and as many Arab intellectuals as possible. The latter no longer had the desire to find out for themselves what the party was trying to do, and could therefore not form an objective opinion.

And that is how a large number of Arab citizens know of the Ba'th only through distorted rumours. It even happened that others undertook actions in the name of the Ba'th, even though they were diametrically opposed to the spirit of the party. Its enemies built the party's reputation, and that is all people remembered.

Given, moreover, that the Ba'th was undoubtedly the party that paid the least attention to its own publicity, its enemies had an easy time making it known. This is how the most striking and positive aspects of the party's activities remained unknown, and even fiercely combatted. The party's ideology, its remarkable organisation on the national level, its militancy, its active stands, its struggle against its own weaknesses, its fight against dictatorship, falsification and usurpation of power, its ever-present concern with affirming its special truth—all these remained unknown and misunderstood for a long time. All these efforts were not taken into consideration and did not receive the attention they deserved. The Ba'th thus remained a prisoner of a negative image that others had forged and which did not correspond to its true nature. Its adversaries and enemies transformed their original hatred into a reason for ruining its reputation.

One of the positive results of the June catastrophe is that the defeat created a climate more propitious to an objective analysis of past and present events. The defeat also made us aware of a basic fact that had escaped our notice all through the previous stage: all the militant forces in the Arab homeland share the same destiny and the same enemy; all the elements that go to make up the Arab revolutionary movement, be they positive or negative, are answerable *de facto* and *de jure* to the movement as a whole. One of the basic requirements of the stage that began after the defeat was the need to adopt broader views, to have a complete grasp of the realities behind the Arab struggle and to exert common efforts so as to raise the level of our fight to that of the challenge the Arab nation faces. Lastly, dedication to truth constitutes our main concern, for it is the indispensable condition for the evolution we desire.

On the level of the Arab homeland in general, and in

iraq in particular, the Ba'th always acts with the aim of truth in mind; the party is clearly aware of it. In the light of this conviction, it has established its relations since June 5, 1967, with the other political forces and has shown a strong sense of responsibility vis-à-vis the other fighting forces in the Arab homeland. Convinced that it has a great mission to accomplish and aware of its responsibilities, the party is in the process of re-examining its militant experiences over the last thirty years, while resolutely turning to the future. The party is less interested in underscoring the positive aspects of its past militant experience than in seeking out those elements that can help to prepare the future of the Arab revolution, to lead it away from the former path, marked by setbacks and defeats, and to put it firmly on a path where progress can be made, a successful path where superficiality will be banished.

The Ba'th Party was born of a simple and sincere idea, without artifice or sophistication; its philosophy can be summed up in the following words: «the Arab nation's confidence in itself». Starting with this idea, which presupposes, among other things, that the present Arab problem is nothing other than a subjective problem, but whose roots run deep since basic contradictions have made the nation lose all control over itself, a whole new revolutionary vision developed. The party, always careful to have theory and practise move along together, brought forward the idea of Arab unity and elaborated a scientific and revolutionary doctrine adapted to the objective conditions for unity, and this after a very long period of struggle.

If one were to define the Ba'th Party in a few words, one could say that it is the party of Arab unity. If one were to sum up in the most succinct manner the party's militant experiences, one could say it has developed an organization on a national scale and that it has fought

for unity. Having discovered the importance of nationalism in the contemporary Arab struggle, having become aware of the ties between a national struggle and the class struggle, having correctly evaluated the role of the working class in the Arab revolution, having placed the Palestinian problem at the heart of the Arab cause, having established the link between the struggle for liberation with that of unity and the class struggle, the party came forward with a new revolutionary theory. This theory shed light on the historic laws that govern the present stage and the laws dealing with the dialectic ties between unity, liberty and socialism.

This theory was not developed from abstract studies with no other purpose than to be written down; this was not an academic treatise; it was the expression of struggles and suffering, a genuine revolutionary option. It is the quintessence of experience, the result of simple, deep and practical stands that emanated from a high sense of responsibility and concern with the future of the Arab nation. This sense of responsibility implies a militant attitude, a high level of awareness and the acceptance of sacrifice. The ethics of combat have always been a component part of the new revolutionary theory, which makes no distinction between the ends and the means, which tolerates no hiatus between theory and practise.

It is for these reasons that the generation that grew up with the birth of Ba'thist thought can be considered a component part of that ideology, and that combat has always been considered the touchstone of that ideology, the criterium with which one seeks truth. The Ba'thist ideology did not aim to discover abstract principles because the Ba'th never was a philosophical school. It represents the truth of the nation and corresponds to the historic period the nation is passing through. It aims, as well, to detect the alienating factors in contemporary Arab life.

In this way, the ideological discoveries of the Ba'th were at the same time practical, militant discoveries, for they constituted a guide for new action. The methods and instruments used by the Party were always of the same nature as its ideology, for they, too, are revolutionary and unitary. That is why the Ba'th insisted on keeping the principles of popular struggle and its national organization.

The Ba'th's authentic approach to the realities of Arab national life does not content itself with appearances, which are merely reflections of the inner contradictions of that life. It is not content with reacting against these negative aspects, for it can see beyond the present context. In the name of authenticity, the Ba'th refused to build its vision of the future on the basis of the present context with its syndromes of disunity, colonialism, underdevelopment and exploitation. It tried, on the contrary, to find in the present stage the dynamic factors for combat, lending more weight to the deep-seated will of the nation than to the skindeep reactions it sometimes has when faced with overwhelming adversity. That is why there is an undeniable socio-cultural scope to the Ba'th vision, which places the nation in its true time continuum. In this vision, the Arab cause is set in the broader context of the international revolutionary struggle, and particularly in the underdeveloped, colonized, exploited and unjustly treated continents. These continents, where entire peoples are oppressed and injustice is the order of the day, and where the patriotic fight for liberation and national unity go hand-in-hand with the class struggle, are inevitably being led to question and reappraise all aspects of their life. This is the necessary prelude to their renaissance.

One can therefore state that «the birth of the Ba'th constitutes a genuine revolution in the history of the Arab nation, first in the sense that it is not the extension of

other, preceding movements; it constitutes, in fact, a sharp break from the past, a kind of conscious and voluntary surgery; it also corresponds to a lifting-up process to reach a high ideological, ethical and spiritual level, despite the weaknesses and inadequacies it has known.» (M. 'Aflaq, *On the Path of the Ba'th*, Sixth Edition, p. 275)

This new revolutionary theory, which gave rise to the Ba'thist movement, developed within the framework of a national organization that encompassed all the territories of the Arab homeland. It is the guiding light behind the Ba'thist movement and its militant action. Constant criticism (which may sometimes seem violent) is directed against certain attitudes that do not correspond to its criteria and ambitions. Attention is paid only to those accomplishments that express its essence and which it has contributed to, such as: Syrian-Egyptian unity in 1958, the overthrow of the regime responsible for the Syrian secession, land reform in Syria and Iraq, the solution to the Kurd problem, the nationalization of oil in Iraq and the establishment of a progressive front, cohesion and entente with the various branches of the Palestinian Revolution, participation in armed combat, and so forth. These diverse actions are not judged according to superficial, relative criteria for, in fact, the proponents of the new revolutionary theory consider them as only minor accomplishments on the long and difficult road that lies ahead. Self-criticism, moreover, is just as severe as criticism for the proponents of this theory, for they consider their past efforts, inconsequential and demand from their militants vigilance and an unfailing capacity for renewal and evolution. «Always beware of static views that cannot pierce the secret of life and capture its essence... Every political movement runs the risk of losing its spontaneity, its freedom and authenticity. Beware of directives that are slowly chan-

ged into hollow traditions and incur the danger of falling into verbiage. The party must not be transformed into a kind of public monument, its ideas buried beneath the foundations. This is the worst thing that can happen to a movement that wants to be creative and innovative». (*In the Path of the Ba'th*, p. 44)

The founder of the Ba'th Party has never stopped repeating these words, ever since the party was founded and even when it became in time an active and determining force in the evolution of more than one Arab country. This concern with renewal and evolution has remained a constant in the thinking of the Ba'thist movement, even though the conditions under which the struggle was led were for the most part hardly propitious for a clear view of the situation. It was often difficult to get perspective on the artificial crises that regularly arose, sparked off by factors of decadence and degradation in Arab national life, and which were bolstered by the machinations of the enemies of the Revolution.

Although the growth and evolution of the Party were not uniformly even —periods of power alternated with periods of weakness; there were successes and setbacks, crises and plots to be warded off— the balance sheet of the struggle is positive. «From the beginning, our struggle was exempt neither from weaknesses nor from lacuna; our march did not always move forward uniformly...», comrade 'Aflaq stated, and continued: «No historical movements is perfect at birth. The important thing is to pass global judgment on our movement: did it succeed in meeting the demands of an historic stage; was it deeply aware of what it should do, and did it do so? That is what counts. We must ask ourselves whether we succeeded in filling the vacuum of a given historical phase and whether, despite our mistakes and lacuna, our creativity was sufficient to build something positive. Does the appearance of this movement mark the begin-



ning of an 'historical story'? If we can answer all these questions in the affirmative, then it can be said that our movement is truly historical.» (*In the Path of the Ba'th*, p. 275).

Strengthened by these certitudes, the Ba'th was able to supply an answer, by way of M. 'Aflaq, to the question put in the aftermath of the June defeat by the Lebanese review «As-Sayyâd» (The Fisherman): «Has defeat struck the death-knoll of the political parties»? «The Arab people», M. 'Aflaq wrote, «have been given another chance to undertake a revolutionary struggle that rests upon an ideology. Today, the Arab nation has an historic opportunity, similar to the one given a quarter of a century ago when our movement was founded, to begin building anew on solid, healthy ground... Grave events have taken place, profound mutations have come about. No doubt we are in store for unpleasant surprises and revolutions, but our movement remains invulnerable; it will be able to resist decrepitude and the weight of passing years. It will continue to play a role, alongside movements that will not have disappeared and others to be born, because it has a fundamental quality —sincerity— which has never been lacking in our party... The Ba'th, moreover, is a party entrusted with a humane mission, and can a humane mission ever be ended? Have the goals the Ba'th established for itself been met? The first stage in the life of our party, which has lasted now for a quarter of a century, can have only one meaning, and the sole lesson one can draw is that the Arab nation is ready to accomplish its historic tasks.» (*Point of Departure*, pp. 45-46)

If nations, social classes and historical movements can be entrusted with missions, then that chosen by the Ba'th is the realization of Arab unity. And if there is something that distinguishes the Ba'thist ideology and

action from that of others, then it is its unitary theory and its unitary organization and methods. The efforts the Ba'th expended to achieve unity were crowned with success with the first unitary experiment ever attempted in the contemporary history of the Arabs: the United Arab Republic in 1958. The fight for unity constitutes the primary justification for the Party's existence.

One could not hope for more favourable circumstances than the ones the nation now finds itself in; they are circumstances arising from a fateful battle imposed upon the nation by those who want to keep it disunited, underdeveloped, exploited and enslaved... Nothing could be more favourable than the present circumstances to strengthen the concept of unity pruned by the Ba'th and the fight it leads to defend this concept, and to correctly define the aims of the Arab Revolution, given the context it finds itself in.

Our party has always relied on a global vision of the contemporary Arab experience. This multi-dimensional vision has allowed the party to develop a new concept of unity, that is fundamentally different from those traditional bourgeois or petit-bourgeois theories that linked the idea of unity with the interests of the classes in power rather than with the interest of the proletariat. Thanks to the Ba'th, the dichotomy between a patriotic struggle and the fight for unity has been done away with. Our party realised that, without unity, the colonialist and zionists would continue to mock our destiny by denaturing our evolution and by perverting our fight for liberation and socialism. Our party also realised that the watchword of unity has for too long remained misunderstood or unknown because it was exploited by those very people who were the least loyal to unity... Indeed, certain unitary projects were sometimes nothing other than a cover-up for colonialist designs. The feudal powers and the bourgeoisie monopolized the concept of

unity, not to fulfill it, but to deflect in a hypocritical if not Machiavellian way the social demands of the people and to combat the social revolution». (*In the Path of the Ba'th*, p. 196)

As early as 1946, before its official founding, the Ba'th stated: «Arab nationalists know that socialism is the surest way to bring about the flowering of national sentiment and a national renaissance, for he knows at the present stage, the Arab struggle can be led only by all the Arabs together... Arab nationalists are the true socialists... The fight that the young generation has taken up against the class that is using the national cause to its own ends —and it is a bankrupt class that is distorting the nature of the struggle— is also a fight to instate socialism. The class of exploiters and profiteers will not relinquish their privileges when, in the name of progress and nationalism, they will be asked to do so. A fight is therefore unavoidable, as is political solidarity». (op. cit., p. 395)

By 1950 the idea of organic links between unity and socialism and between the national cause and the proletariat became more precise, in harmony with the new concepts developed by the Ba'th. In *The Path of the Ba'th* (p. 312), 'Aflaq wrote:

«The popular classes represent the entire nation because they constitute the overwhelming majority of the population and the truly productive element in society. Setting socialism is the prerequisite for the survival and development of our nation».

Although the Ba'th gives great importance to the close relationship between unity, liberty and socialism —this relationship is an underpinning of its ideology— it nonetheless puts unity in a central position. The pre-eminence of unity comes across very clearly in its unitary and dialectic theory, which can be summed up as follows:

1. Arab unity, wrote 'Aflaq (in *The Path of the Ba'th*, p. 220), «consists in promoting an ideology and a struggle that oppose disunity, with all that is implicit in that word —mental habits, privileges, and socio-political situations within every region of the Arab homeland. Unity is a fundamental concept, a living idea that must evolve according to a solidly established theory. It must be achieved through organized combat in pre-determined stages; it is a day-to-day struggle based on defined principles. Unity is a fight against disunity and the various factors that tend to perpetuate it. Unity begins with an essential observation: «the Arab nation is one and indivisible»; the problems of each Arab region can then be tackled with this in mind.

Unity does not consist in reassembling scattered parts; it is practically the creation of a nation, that will resolve its contradictions. The fight for unity will eradicate the effects of underdevelopment, impotence and deviationism that now poison what would otherwise be a healthy Arab existence. It creates clear-cut revolutionary situations, where no ambiguities cloud the struggle to restore the nation's true identity.

2. A «unitary spirit», according to revolutionary concepts, differs in quality and quantity from the «spirit of disunity». Once unity has been achieved, the nation's potential will not be the sum of the various regions' potentialities in a state of disunion. The whole will be different: the freedom which each separate Arab region aspires to does not correspond to that which the Arab nation needs. Nor does it correspond to the freedom it is capable of attaining once it is capable of examining its own destiny and that of humanity as well. The same holds true for socialism: if it is confined within the borders of each separate Arab region, it loses scope and, impaired, can only take timid, partial measures, whereas it could grow to its full dimensions were its

framework the entire Arab world, taken as an economic unit and as a popular fighting unit.

3. Arab unity is part of a whole, which is the Arab cause. The unitary revolution cannot be led independently nor separately from the Arab struggle as a whole, for it is a struggle against hostile foreign forces, most notably imperialism and zionism, and all those forms of corruption rampant in the nation. The unitary revolution is therefore bound up with the struggle for national liberation and a socialist revolution. It is therefore illogical and impossible to concentrate exclusively on unity. Such an attitude would divide, and consequently distort, the Arab cause; it would impair revolutionary content and would no longer have an impact on the people. The Arab cause must be indivisible.

Despite the dialectic ties between unity, liberty and socialism, the first objective —unity— is the most revolutionary because it is the most dangerous fight facing the Arab people. It demands personal effort, sacrifices, suffering, and a broad vision. According to the intrinsic logic of revolutionary theory, the desire for unity can only be so strong as the degree of commitment to Revolution of individuals, groups and the entire nation. And nothing can have so revolutionary an impact as unity, be it the anticolonialist fight, no matter how important or how violent, social conflict, class struggle or the fight for socialism, even though it overthrows privileges and traditions. Unity is the most important prerequisite for the profound transformation pruned by the Ba'th.

4. Revolutionary theory rejects the political calculation whereby unity is like arithmetics —just add up the various Arab regions— or like some kind of mechanical construction that can be built only under certain circumstances and only when the right moment comes along. Genuine unity is a much more serious underta-

king than political unity, which succeeds only in «unifying disunity» and adding up one state of underdevelopment with another.

Genuine unity resides in the struggle to ensure ideological unity, common objectives and ambitions shared by all the sons of the nation; a quick calculation is not satisfactory for, in our opinion, there is no question of uniting disparate elements, but healthy ones. The aim is not for the Arab nation to react hastily faced with internal divisions. And it is more than likely that circumstances are not at all favourable for such a superficial political unification.

Revolutionary theory also rejects those traditional, outdated views that consider unity as a return, pure and simple, to a «natural» state, that is to say, the state the nation was in before being parcelled out. Unity, as we conceive and desire it, cannot be a return to the past. Unity is a revolutionary product of this century, and it is inconceivable to take it out of its historical context. It is a radically new step, supported by an equally new experience.

We also disqualify petit-bourgeois theory on unity, based as it is on regionalist and bureaucratic tendencies. Unity is conceived of as a mere extension of one region's powers over all the others; the proletarian masses are pushed into a bureaucratic framework, and the working class is given no role to play. Petit-bourgeois authorities do nothing but dream of unitary protocols, imposed from above, whose aim is to protect the regimes in power.

In February 1956, the founder of the Ba'th addressed the Cultural Club of Beyrut in the following terms:

«No force other than the Arab people is capable of achieving Arab unity. No governments, no foreign states, no politicians or intellectuals are capable of bringing

such a task to completion. Only the people, the masses of the Arab people, can reach this primary objective.» (*The Battle for Unique Destiny*, p. 62).

In Casablanca, he made the following statement along the same lines:

«If we have come to the decision to begin the struggle again on new revolutionary bases which will not let past errors take hold, then we must study and analyse those errors and bad habits that occurred repeatedly over the last decade or two. As they grew larger and multiplied, they took their toll of the living forces within the Arab struggle, corrosively attacking it from within, while everyone stood by unconcernedly or without even being aware of what was happening. The people must know the truth, for logically they are the only hope and the only way to correct the errors of the past and to prepare a new revolutionary impetus, no longer prone to error.» (*Point of Departure*, First Edition, p. 43).

In 1969, at Baghdad, he declared:

«Arab unity can be achieved only by the proletariat and will become concrete only if the overwhelming majority of the people take up arms to defend it. Unity will be genuine only if it is a war of liberation, that is, if we unite to free our occupied territories. The colonialist and Zionist power will not tolerate for one moment the fact that we are united. The road to genuine unity runs through Palestine.» (*Point of Departure*, p. 135)

The revolutionary theorists of Arab unity are fully conscious of the nation's identity, consider unity as the basic principle and guideline for the contemporary Arab struggle and realise that the proletarian masses are the basic component in the fight for unity. They are also aware of the fact that a revolutionary organism capable of helping the people reach their goals must rely on a unified ideology and a nationwide organization built

upon genuinely revolutionary structures. The national struggle must, in the last analysis, be strengthened by a national strategy that expresses the unitary ideology it is designed to achieve.

Today, these ideas have spread to all the sectors of the Arab Revolution, and all are agreed that there are cogent reasons for an Arab national action. This was not the case thirty years ago: no one recognised that these concepts are both basic and well-founded. At the time, the Ba'th Party was the only one to have adopted them; they were applied to daily action, and were considered as the moving force for militancy among the people.

What most perfectly characterizes Ba'thist militancy since the early 'forties is its continued and determined struggle for Arab unity and for a united fighting front.

This tendency could be observed as early as 1941, when the Ba'th organized a solidarity campaign to support and participate in the revolution of Rashîd 'Aly al-Kaylânî in Iraq. In 1943, the Party launched a vast campaign to denounce the attack on Lebanese sovereignty. In 1945, it mobilized the masses against the American decision to allow American Jews to emigrate to Palestine. In 1946, it organized a solidarity campaign in favour of Egypt, that was then deep in the fight for independence and the evacuation of British occupying forces. In the same years, it protested the signing of the Anglo-Jordanian treaty, denounced the crimes of French colonialism in the Maghreb, and launched an appeal to the Arab people to take up the fight in Palestine. In 1947, it gave special attention to the Palestinian cause and called for armed combat, linking this directive to the principles of popular struggle and the Arab Revolution. In 1948, it took part in the war in Palestine and denounced the manoeuvres and false situations created by the Arab governments of the period. In 1950 it showed a genuinely unitary attitude towards the problem



of the Syro-Iraqian federation. In 1951, it pruned an original conception of neutralism that was more progressive than that held before: it was then that it warned the Arab League not to consider joining the Western bloc under the pretext of neutralism which, in fact, was nothing but a trap. It gave its support to the Moroccan national movement against colonialism. It ceaselessly called for the unification of Arab struggles and particularly appealed to the Arab socialist parties to unite their efforts and to draft a charter for common national action against colonialist and Zionist schemes. Lending support to the Egyptian people in its fight against British colonialism, it denounced the policy of colonial pacts that sought to splinter the militant forces and isolate Egypt in its tough and bloody battle. In 1954, the Ba'th aided the Algerian Revolution. In 1956, it issued the directive for unity between Syria and Egypt and took the leadership at the head of the fighting popular masses to attain this objective.

Throughout the preparatory stage for unity in 1958—a stage that was marked on the one hand by the tripartite attack on Egypt and, on the other hand, by the provocations of the Turkish armies massed on Syria's frontiers—the Ba'th took action on both the practical and the theoretical plane, attempting to express yet more clearly its theory of unity, the form it should take and the conditions for its defense and preservation. This preoccupation was so overriding that most of the articles by M. 'Aflaq presented in *The Battle for a Unique Destiny* are devoted to this problem. In the wave of popular struggles, the clarification of the concept of unity and unitary theory made militants wary of the errors and deviations that could undermine the fight for unity. In April 1956, the founder of the Ba'th wrote:

«That we are now trying to establish between Egypt

and Syria unity of a federation is not terribly important; what we do set great store by is that the unity or federation be established on solid foundations and that it embark on a healthy path. This will allow it to deepen its roots and to progress towards plenitudes, that can only come about once complete Arab unity has been achieved. Unity is taking its first steps and may yet stumble, for there are numerous and difficult obstacles in its path. It is logical that the colonial powers and Israel continue to join forces to halt our march at every step; and, on the internal scene, the feudal and reactionary forces also contribute, perhaps substantially, to raising obstacles. The new danger threatening unity comes from those falsifiers who have infiltrated our ranks to pervert them. The only way to counterattack is to take unity out of its tight-laced official framework and hand it over to the popular masses. If they succeed in apprehending the real nature of the anti-unitary interests, intentions and tendencies, and if public opinion is mobilised and succeeds in organizing itself to turn vision into reality, then one will be able to say that an efficacious, positive force has come into being that is capable of confronting both internal and external conspiracies». (*The Battle for a Unique Destiny*, pp. 67-69).

In 1957, the Ba'th proposed the formation of a national council that would at once guarantee the accomplishments of the preceding stages and be empowered to organize the struggle and improve its methods. Because of its «national» dimensions, it would also be the organ capable of countering the attacks of the reaction, whose plotting affects the nation as a whole.

Between 1956 and 1958, over fifty articles were written. Now published in three volumes —*The Battle for A Unique Destiny* (35 articles); *In the Path of the Ba'th* (14 articles); and *The Ba'th Struggle* ( Nidhâl-al Ba'th, Tome III)— these articles were designed to

establish criteria and principles for the future revolutionary unitary policy.

The Ba'th's activities among the people and the Syrian parliament as well as the unitary climate it slowly succeeded in creating throughout the nation, and its numerous stands and struggles met with its first great success in the combat for unity with the Syrian-Egyptian fusion in 1958. All agree that the Ba'th Party was instrumental in creating it, even though the Party did not get the chance to complete the building of unity. This fusion answered a profound need of the popular masses and was greeted with great enthusiasm, for it restored the nation's confidence in itself and in its future. It was an historic event of tremendous importance. Unfortunately nothing had been provided to protect it from the inevitable dangers that lay in waiting nor from the mistakes it was bound to make. When the Ba'th threw itself into this experience, it was fortified by its national revolutionary ideology, which was capable of examining all the aspects of the Arab revolutionary movement, but its means were not sufficient to handle all the problems that subsequently arose. Its means were, in fact, meagre: though the Ba'th was organized in Syria, it was not so in Egypt, for the leaders of the Egyptian Revolution did not consider it as a valid interlocutor. The Party was content to put itself at the complete disposal of the union on an unconditional basis, even going so far as to dissolve its own organization within the U.A.R. This situation gave rise to zealous and sometimes uncontrolled attitudes on the part of militants. This had unforeseen consequences and the Ba'th lost control over events; it was thus incapable of reacting to events that were a far cry from its own concepts. The Egyptian leaders who had adhered to the project for fusion had at their disposal any number of means and tremendous potential, but their ideas on

unity, forged from their own experience, were far from what they should have been: they completely overlooked the importance of organised popular action and the role the Ba'th should have played. All the Arab militants considered unity as a true revolution, resolutely turned towards the future; it was the prerequisite for a total Arab revolution and general militancy, a real chance to hasten the process of evolution. But unity secreted forces that its leaders did not know how to combat despite their past experience as militants; traditional modes of militant action were outstripped. On the official level, the incapacity to understand the deep motivations of Arab militant action, and a lack of conscientiousness allied most certainly with class affiliations —all this helped create a knot of contradictions between unity as an ideal and the unitary state as a reality, between action on the official level and popular action. What was more serious was that the forces that had given impetus to unity were not in the command posts; these posts were filled, in fact, by persons secretly introduced by the reaction to execute the imperialist-Zionist plan to destroy unity.

Throughout this period, the Ba'th felt it was its duty to warn all against the possible dangers, judging their gravity according to criteria established during the phase preceding the founding of the U.A.R. Its concern was to preserve unity at all costs and to let no one benefit from the mistakes made, even if they were serious. But as the party had accepted to dissolve, it was in no position to play a role with the necessary mastery, and it was helpless when it came to saving the U.A.R.

At that time, more precisely in 1960, the Ba'th declared:

«Even if mistakes are made, unity is more important than anything else, because it is capable of correcting mistakes. Unity needs men who believe in it, who are inspired by correct principles and who are willing to

work for it. It needs men who can convince the greatest number of people, who can broaden the struggle, who can combat the mentality that feeds on disunity and can oust those interest that disunity satisfies. In short, it needs a generation of men capable of building unity into something solid, that will not run the risk of collapsing.»

But the established union moved slowly away from its militant organs, and the bureaucratic administration even became their most formidable enemy: the fall of the United Arab Republic became inevitable. Without doubt the Ba'th played a great role in staving off secession and continuing the struggle. But it was not an easy task because the secession furnished the enemies of unity with an ideal opportunity to spew out their hatred. With vengeance in mind, they ganged up against any organization or any idea related to unity and tried to destroy the positive gains the Arab masses had tirelessly struggled for throughout the 'Fifties. The Ba'th, for its part, was shaken by internal crises stemming from the contradictory reactions of its members during the period of secession. In *The Battle for A Unique Destiny*, M. 'Aflaq attempts to define what the phase following secession meant:

«Secession poses a thorny problem, because the situation it creates arises from a failure, the failure of the unitary experiment. Contrary to what one might think, this is not a mere return to the state of disunity, which has its own justifications, its own laws and its own bases. Colonialism and the reaction —the forces that promote the spirit of secession— are combining their energies not to combat some future prospect of Arab unity but to track down any trace of unitary ideas or forces and to crush them underfoot, wherever they be. Secession rents unity asunder; disunity has become an incontrovertible fact. This coalition is trying to turn the failure of the unitary experiment into a weapon powerful enough to

sap the very foundations of unity: their so-called proof is that the state of disunity is a natural state and that the existence of «independent» Arab entities corresponds to the definitive, eternal state of the homeland».

To this day the consequences of secession can be felt: not the least of them are the June defeat and the internal failures the unitary forces suffered. The plotters have succeeded in rendering null and void any form of reaction against secession and have reduced to silence those very persons who were the most affected by the fall of the U.A.R. Having adapted their tactics to the new situation, they succeeded in winning over those who were racked by feelings of failure and who were prey to emotional reactions.

The Arab and Socialist Ba'th Party, the party of unity, was gravely affected by the secession and the ensuing backwash. It was the victim of numerous attempts to splinter it, of all sorts of conspiracies and pressures to liquidate it once and for all. It is surely no mere coincidence that the June catastrophe occurred when an impressive number of its militants were either in prison or in exile.

The attempt to falsify unitary revolutionary ideology was certainly the most pernicious form of attack, as it was directed against the very movement that best represented that ideology. A power that falsely claimed the name of the Ba'th set about distorting and silencing the party organisation and ensnaring the revolutionary ardour of its militants. Corruption was widespread —there were promises of jobs and money— sincere revolutionaries were put under pressure, excluded from the party and replaced by hostile men who wanted to get ahead at any price. The last stroke came when these men presented themselves as the true advocates of the party and there were no real militants left.

In the history of the Ba'th, the fight against this

fraud is marked with violence and bitterness. Their conscience torn, the leaders could not decide what attitude to take: should they be sincere and take the case to the people, telling them about the crises the party was going through and the risks of deviation that could deflect the party from a correct revolutionary line? These dangers arose because the Ba'th had prematurely come to power and because certain elements were reacting in a disquieting manner against the unitary experience. Meanwhile, the colonial powers and the reaction were constantly weaving conspiracies, and there was no end to diffamatory anti-Ba'thist campaigns. Under such a virulents onslaught, the primary demands of sincerity and honesty with oneself and the people was forgotten. That explains why the party hid several problems that were creating internal upheaval for fear of giving grist to the enemies' mill, for they would have not hesitated to use this sincerity as an additional arm to destroy it. The gravest plot the colonialists and enemies of the Arab nation can boast of is precisely this attempt to lay a trap for the Revolution from within, by corrupting its organs, the political parties and the trade unions and by suborning the role of the popular masses and strangling democratic liberties. For sheer scope, these undertakings remain unequalled, even in the aftermath of the secession or the June defeat.

But from this negative experience, the Ba'th Party was able to draw some basic lessons. After pitiless self-criticism, it subordinated itself to the patriotic, national and progressive forces and launched a directive for common action within fronts established on a regional or national level. It set about creating a new climate favourable to revolutionary action, radically different from the degraded state the unitary forces had fallen into between the secession and the June defeat. It tried to give the unitary struggle solid and ambitious content and

to rid it of the pitfalls of improvisation and confusion. It attempted to deliver militants from the hands of those who were using the unitary struggle for their own advantage and to give it back to the militant popular masses. Once this was accomplished, the struggle for unity was once again endowed with a revolutionary, universal character, and proletarian revolutionaries could once again support it.

The final reports of party congresses as well as the writings of its founder, published after the June defeat, insist on certain facts and principles that express the revolutionary theory of Arab unity and that constitute the guidelines for Ba'thist action. They are as follow:

1. The objective conditions of the present phase make unity necessary; there is consequently no place for regionalism. There must be support from the popular masses, and all autocratic, dictatorial or bureaucratic tendencies must be rejected. The situation demands that the principal contradiction —that which opposes us to the foreign enemy— come ahead of all internal contradictions. It confirms the existence of bonds that link national action to a social revolution; it is dangerous to lend more importance to one than the other.

2. The revolutionary theory of Arab unity is the only ideological attitude that can resorb the consequences of defeat. It alone can free us from the direct pressures of regional situations and help us comprehend the cause as a whole. Revolutionary theory also takes into account the fact that regionalism tends to perpetuate the consequences of defeat and prohibits any chance to establish a new balance.

The popular masses are the true source of unity and alone can guarantee its integrity; they are the highest authority to whom one should submit any question concerning politics, militancy, armed combat legality, and the forms the struggle should take. The party



imperatively insists on returning to the people because it is conscious of the incompetency and lacuna existing in the Arab regimes and in the revolutionary movements, as well as the distance that separates the leaders from their militants and the militants from the popular masses. The revolutionary movement must be considered as being the property of the masses: in this way, they will participate in the internal evolution of the movement and will take over the leadership, finally playing the role they deserve.

From this confidence in the people and a hatred of any form of tutelage over them is born a genuine unitary spirit. It denotes a profound faith in democracy and a will to create a climate favourable to its exercise.

A unitary spirit also implies that the Palestinian cause be given a central position and serve as a criterium for unitary orientation. The roads to liberation and unity are inseparable; the true road to unity runs through Palestine and the struggle there.

3. At the present stage, a unitary spirit must be the fruit of a global view that can explain how to break the fetters of separatism and that takes into account Arab potential, the means at the Arabs' disposal. Lastly, it must consider the Arabs as an indivisible whole and find the way to mobilise their energy so that they will engage upon the revolution.

4. It is disunity that has caused the greatest harm to the Arab Nation. It has prevented the nation from being able to match forces with the foreign enemy, and this despite the fact that revolutions have taken place over the last twenty-five years and that a number of progressive regimes have been established in Arab countries.

An immense distance separates us from the enemy, given its degree of development. Time will not work in our favour unless we can leave regionalism, with its logic and methods of action, behind. We will not catch up unless we abandon traditional modes of militancy for

armed combat. It is through armed combat that we will be able to meet all the challenges that come our way.

5. As 'Aflaq pointed out in *Point of Departure* (p. 119), the new phase is in a way a re-birth of the party, because it has completely overhauled its precepts, its ideology, its struggle and the prospects for the struggle. The duty of Ba'thist militants —and of all Arab militants— is to forge new, more radical and ambitious formulas and to tap all the potentialities, capabilities and latent power within our Nation. The new step we are about to take must be exemplary; it must surpass the previous twenty years in excellence.

This brief account of the Ba'th Party's history shows that it is the party of unity; its ambition has always been to accomplish its historic mission as the party of the Arab Revolution and to reach the objectives of the Arab nation: unity, liberty and socialism.

Although, as the founder of the Ba'th asserts, the previous stage did not bring about the Arab Revolution because the people were not led into armed combat, which would have been the culminating point, the stage we are now embarked on is that of re-birth. Strengthened by its ambitions, its militant experiences and the lesson drawn from the past, the Ba'th is now launching into battle. It hopes to bring about the true Arab Revolution of militant Arab unity by relying on principles that will promote unification of the revolutionary Arab forces and set them on the way to liberation. Although the Ba'th saw very early the true dimensions of the Palestinian cause as its place within the Arab Revolution and although it pruned from the very beginning armed combat to free Palestine, its fight for the cause can only be measured by the means at its disposal. Today the party believes that the only way to mobilize the potential of the Arab nation, to arm the people and

advance the struggle for liberation is to establish common fronts on regional and national levels.

The prospects afforded by the Arab Revolution go beyond the limits of the nation, for our cause is humane and just and our struggle —against colonialism, Zionism, and the reaction— is also a struggle against underdevelopment and exploitation. The international dimensions of the Arab Revolution ally our struggle with that of the peoples of the Third World and the friendly socialist countries. A common fight against a common enemy tie us to all these peoples and countries. If, in our fight for liberation, unity and socialism, we succeed in allying ourselves with the international revolutionary forces, the Arab struggle will take on its true dimensions and will profit from the revolutionary capacities of the nation and from those of militants the world over who express their sympathy, their solidarity and their support for our cause.

It is with this in mind that the PBAS works for the future, a future built by the people to establish unity, liberty and socialism.



## Chapter V

# The XXVIth anniversary of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party

Today, on the 7th April 1973, militants of the ABSP are celebrating the XXVIth anniversary of their Party, the party of Arab socialist revolution. Arab patriots and democrats, and all those who place their faith in a united, socialist Arab homeland, are celebrating this anniversary with us.

Doctor Elyâs Farah, a member of the National Direction of the ABSP has agreed to reply to questions asked him by the magazine «Wa'i al 'Ummal» («Workers' Awakening») on this historic date.

### *First Question*

The ABSP, while extolling the realization of unity, freedom and socialism as a solution to the political and socio-economic problems facing the Arab Nation, is based on cultural ideas which are contemporaneous and, at the same time, tightly bound to the Nation's past, from its inception until the present day. Admitting this fact, can you define the historical bases of the links established by the Ba'th between its avowed mission and the Nation's past? In what respect does its revolutionary

vision contribute to the enrichment of Arab ideology in general and consolidate the national and historic bases of the various sectors of the Arab liberation movement?

### *Reply*

Unity, freedom and socialism do not constitute in the eyes of the Ba'th simple solutions to political and socio-economic problems in the Arab homeland. They are the indispensable conditions of its resurgence; the survival of the Nation, the affirmation of its identity, the integrity of its territories, the regained control of its sources of wealth, can only come into being through these ideas. Ability to renew ideology, constancy in the struggle to defeat alienating and degrading factors, which annihilate the creative revolutionary potential of the masses and contribute to the loss of individual human dignity, aqually depend on these ideas.

The watchwords unity, freedom and socialism, resume the necessities of the present stage in history, both subjectively and objectively. They are, at one and the same time, the aims and the means to achieve these ends. In reality, as long as disunion lasts, as long as propaganda aiming at the atomization of our strength is spread, as long as the war, declared and secretly waged, annihilating all the elements capable of unifying hearts, powers, regions, regimes and the Arab armed forces, is continued, it is impossible to speak of unity, of freedom and of socialism, without extolling radical revolution of a profound nature. Zionist occupation of our lands goes on: Imperialists and Zionists are inventing new expansionist conspiracies, allying together to ensure the control of our resources and to repress all revolutionary hot-beds within our homeland. In these conditions, the only language we can use is that of revolution. Combat alone is capable of expressing the identity of the Nation, its will to live and to progress.

When the Ba'th calls for unity, freedom and socialism, it is expressing a dialectical and revolutionary doctrine, making for a scientific approach to Arab realities and the stage in history through which the Nation is passing at present.

In the light of the evolution of the contemporary international scene, it is inevitable that such a theory should assume historic ties linking it to the past, the present and the future of the Nation. In this context, the governing laws peculiar to the evolution of contemporary Arab society are revealed, and this revelation helps us to become aware of more general laws determining the evolution of all human communities and to acquire a clear vision of their mechanisms and their potential growth.

We shall now try to evoke the thought-processes out of which the theory of unity, freedom and socialism evolved.

1. *Past Experience* — to be precise, the intellectual, spiritual and militant experience of Islam, with its socio-cultural and revolutionary tenor. According to our analysis, Islam has given the Arabs the possibility to pass from a state of mutual ignorance, of under-development and cultural and spatial isolation to a state of solidarity, of re-grouping and unity, of an opening-out and a new creativity and has given them a chance to assume the accomplishment of a civilizing, humanitarian mission.

2. *The struggle for national liberty*. The fight to combat the exploitation of the working-classes and the fight for religious freedom waged on the European continent during the last two centuries have accelerated revolutionary ideas in the contemporary world.

3. *The Revolution of October 1917* was a prelude to a radical change in the image of the known world; the abolition of capitalist methods of development was precipitated and the foundation laid for a solid bastion in the development of socialism.

4. *Sufferings endured during daily combat* united the cultural values of the Arab heritage with values prevalent today, so soldering them in the present. They have become the guide for Arab revolutionary action.

Daily strife, in the measure that it attempts to solve the problems of the Arab Nation considered in its entirety, is a true part of the international revolutionary movement. It concretizes the dialectical links between theory and practice and disavows all tendencies to abstraction and experimentalism. The links sustained by the Ba'th with the Nation's past, its ideological connections with the revolutionary heritage are, as a result of daily strife, in constant evolution. It is a living, creative relationship, based on the precepts of «assimilation, adaptation and compatibility».

This concept of struggle guarantees Arab revolutionary ideology against the danger of sclerosis, immobility and tendencies to abstraction which inadequately take into account the living reality and neglect popular aspirations. It also preserves ideology from any empirical leanings towards restricting thought-processes to practical experience alone, thereby fastening on to detail and preventing the apprehension of truth; such anecdotal ways of thought, which dim complete and exhaustive vision, slow down revolutionary action and are a menace to its authenticity.

There is no doubt that the revolutionary vision which we uphold adds to the enrichment of Arab ideology, gives it the opportunity to acquire greater maturity, by mingling together authenticity and continual open-mindedness, and by the maintenance of constant relationships with all that is general and universal in revolutionary experience throughout the world.



## *Second Question*

Numerous events are taking place every day and there are indications to confirm the correctness of the Party's views, in particular when it states that Palestine is the departure-base for unity and that unity is the just means for the recovery of Palestine. In view of the ferocious armed aggression of the Imperialists, Zionists and reactionaries against the proletarian masses and the national revolutionary ideas by which they are motivated, how does the Ba'th envisage joint Arab action to liberate Palestine? In the light of present conditions and the imperatives imposed by the stage through which we are passing, how does the Ba'th envisage eventual unity, bilateral or multilateral, between progressive Arab regimes? Is there a genuine possibility that an advanced form of unity can come into being at the level of regimes and popular masses?

## *Reply*

Arab unity is the first objective in the ideology of the Ba'th. To the challenge launched against the very existence of the Nation, unity is the answer.

But the Ba'th's concept of unity differs radically from certain current ideas, both from naïve, traditional ideas and from recent concepts, just as naïve, which have made their appearance on the political Arab scene.

For the Ba'th, the word unity signifies an ideology, a unified national organization, common aims and a common strategy, sustained and nourished by the militant movement in its entirety. It is the popular masses who must lead this militant movement with, at their head, the unitarian, revolutionary vanguard to defend their interests. Given the fact that they consider the Arab Nation as an indivisible whole, and that they

deal with problems with this principle in mind, the Palestinian cause holds a central position in the Ba'th's unitary strategy. The problem of Palestine is not just one of the innumerable ills from which the Arab Nation suffers: it is totally allied to a cause on which the destiny of the Nation depends. If the Nation does not undertake to liberate Palestine, other lands will be constantly threatened with occupation or annexation. The Nation will find itself unable to unify, to develop or to hand on a sense of purpose to future generations.

The way to liberation begins with ourselves, with the modification of our intellectual processes, our minds, our life-force: it exacts from us a high sense of our own dignity, a capacity for sacrifice, total resolve in the struggle, unflinching generosity in our effort. We must open our minds to science and realize the importance for the organization of our future, down to the details of our daily lives. We must shake off all elements which diminish our personality, everything liable to darken our vision of the true dimension of this battle of destiny, and be ready for our responsibilities in this combat.

The fight for the liberation of Palestine is, therefore, equally a fight with ourselves, for we must readjust our personality and call into question the very structures of the reality around us. It is a national conflict on a class basis. In the name of its ideological dimensions, it brings together the cultural revolution and armed combat, and makes liberation the essential link in the fight for unity.

Unity, therefore, can only be born out of strife, and its objective is the liberation of our usurped territories. In order that this liberation shall come to pass, we must prepare ourselves ideologically and psychologically; we must mobilize the popular masses, organize and use our foresight on the level of the Party in schools, factories, barracks and families, in order that every domain of existence be mobilized with this battle in mind... It is

through battle, and battle alone, that the Arab Nation can come to its true unity.

### *Third Question*

The Party has categorically resolved a crucial problem of an ideological and political nature, regarding the national socialistic struggle, by highlighting the leading role to be played by the working-classes in the process of socialist transformation in the Arab homeland. In so doing, it has shown that the path it follows is that of authentic Arab socialism, inspired by the principal concepts of scientific revolutionary ideology.

How did the Party reach these convictions, and what results are to be foreseen on progressive political movements in the Arab homeland?

If we pre-suppose —and this pre-supposition must inevitably become a reality— that the stage following the June defeat demands radical ideological stands, can we state that the Party has acted intellectually in this sense, and, in the case of an affirmative reply, what are the concrete results of its action in this respect?

### *Reply*

By realizing the leading role of the working classes in the process of socialist transformation in the fight for unity and for the liberation of Palestine, the Ba'th based itself ideologically on its dialectical, revolutionary doctrine, and scientifically approached the realities of Arab life. As Comrade Michel 'Aflaq, Secretary-General of our Party has written:

«Our Party is a leftist party. It has been so since its inception... Our Party is the one which has been able to

create a genuine progressive tendency... It is an authentic leftist party.»

A true leftist spirit lies in the establishment of dialectical scientific and revolutionary links between the various combats led by Arabs towards unity, freedom and socialism. Starting from this principle, the different roles which fall to the various social classes in the Arab revolutionary strategy can be evaluated. For a third of a century, throughout the stages of militant struggle led by the Ba'th, the role of the working classes appears unadventurous. If we follow the ideological evolution of the Party, one can perceive a new awareness, clearer and more deeply involved, developing in the working-classes after the June defeat. The following self-criticism witnesses to this (*The Point of Departure*, pag 125):—

«The primary cause of the failure of the Arab Revolution to accomplish its aims and realize its objectives is due to its narrow vision of the working class. This vision was inexact and incomplete... During the past years, the working class and the proletarian masses were placed in a position where it was impossible for them to play their proper role on the national and social plane. The movements and regimes who called themselves progressive or revolutionary had no deep faith in the people, in the proletarian classes who comprise the overwhelming majority of our Nation and were unable to envisage the role they were capable of playing.»

Following this criticism, the Comrade Secretary-General of the Ba'th makes an attempt to uncover the primary strategic aim of the stage following on defeat. He defines this objectives as «the transition of the Arab Revolution, hitherto animated by a semirevolutionary attitude which adopted half-measures and stopped half-way, to a fully revolutionary attitude and the adoption of radical measures, enabling the Revolution to go to the bitter end, with neither hesitation nor manoeuvring».

Continuing his criticism, Comrade 'Aflaq brings his attention to bear on the Party (*The Point of Departure*, page 79). He writes:

«As long as the working-class and the proletarian masses do not form the majority at the heart of our movement, in a position to guide our steps, we shall always be uncertain about our objectives, the integrity of our organization and the measures taken by our leaders. This is our unique guarantee. It is in the interest of the proletarian masses that the Party remains revolutionary and faithful to its principles and to its objectives, refusing all bargaining, avoiding all deviations, scorning to cling to simple, short-term objectives.»

For the Arab Revolution, this definition of measures for the stage following defeat and of its strategy on a practical and ideological level constitutes an attitude of historic importance. The Ba'th is working towards these measures, so that they may acquire their full political dimension in the whole Arab homeland. In celebrating its XXVIth anniversary, the Ba'th places this task in the historic mission it has taken upon itself, the supreme objectives of which are Unity, Freedom and Socialism.



## Chapter VI

# The IVth anniversary of the birth of the Arab Liberation Front

The shock-troops of «Fedaïsm» (the Resistance), members of the Arab Liberation Front, are commemorating now at the beginning of 1973, the IVth Anniversary of a militant action of historic importance —the foundation of an Arab Front, genuinely Arab in its ideology, organization and strategy. Its mission is to lead armed combat to liberate Palestine. As the Palestinian cause is the cause of all the Arab peoples and is the cornerstone of the struggle the Nation is waging against all those who oppose its resurgence, the birth of such a Front was a logical event. Its primary objective is to mobilize the potential of the Arab Nation and to incite the masses throughout the length and breadth of the homeland to take up arms in the defense of Arab life and civilization and bring to pass the objectives of the Revolution. These objectives —the unification of the homeland, the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of socialism— will allow our people to develop fully, for they will encourage the creation of favourable conditions for evolution and renewal in every sphere of life. Socialist transformations precipitate the march of history and the evolutionary processes of humanity,

particularly processes set in motion by revolutions, such as those led by the enslaved and oppressed peoples who suffer from exploitation, under-development and disunion — the major evils of the three distressed continents, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

On this occasion, we must call to memory the martyrs of the Arab Liberation Front who, by the offering of their lives, delineated the true road to national resurgence, and thereby stand as the surest guides for total liberation — liberation which includes Palestine and all other usurped Arab lands. The blood of these martyrs cleanses our vision of future responsibilities and reminds us of a fundamental truth, that both the present and the past, in their temporal dimensions, only precede the hour when ambition, will-power and determination will have their flowering, sustained by the enriching opportunities of combat at the very heart of the Arab Nation. The past, whether recent or far-removed, the present, with its positive and negative aspects, are, in the eyes of Arab revolutionaries, only harbingers of the future, when the liberation of Palestine and the unity of the homeland will become a reality. It must be understood that this realization can only be brought about by the oppressed masses in undertaking the struggle for the edification of socialism.

During the last few years, incidents which have left their mark on the militant Arab struggle prove that contradictions of the past weigh heavily on socio-political life, are reflected in its present and tend to strangle it in a straight-jacket where continuity is abolished, where there is neither vigour nor enthusiasm, and where authenticity, heroism and an opening out of the future have ceased to exist.

The stage previous to the June defeat reveals a saddening fact to all militants of the homeland; the thought-processes, the methods of action, organization



and planification responsible for defeat, have in no way changed. They go on as before. The gulf between the present and the future ever deepens. The distance separating apparent realities and real potentialities is increasing. Current plans are revealed to be inadequate to convey the determination and ambition of our militants. The celebration of the anniversary of the birth of the Arab Liberation Front has the same bearing as any other militant action. It aims at safe-guarding the future of revolutionary action and preserving it from the leprosy of under-development, at dragging it out from the depths of concerted conspiracy among imperialists, Zionists and reactionaries. Its aim is to revive in the hearts of militants the truths which will inspire them to fight to the end for the prevalence of the Arab cause.

It must not be forgotten that the dramatic perpetuation of past mistakes —those same mistakes which caused defeat and which continue in the stage following June 1967, as witnessed by the state of paralysis in which the future movement has fallen— is unquestionably the indication of the differences prevailing in degrees of national awareness and fidelity to the Arab cause, in the persistence of class privileges, in tribal interests, all factors of «qualitative» contradiction which distinguish the present stage in history. If immobility is to be shaken, hesitations overcome and imposture brought to an end, there is only one way out —resolve the contradictions in the interests of the Arab revolutionary masses and cast off all impediments to the revolutionary potential of the Nation.

This anniversary sounds the alarm, warning us of the pitfalls awaiting the future of «fedâie» action and that of all revolutionary action in the Arab homeland. It is equally for us a beacon highlighting the dangers which threaten us. From this point onwards, full vent can be given to militant action, the only action capable of

carving out the future path decisively. The difference between the real revolutionary Arab path and all others, which coincide with our enemies' interests and finally end in their service, flashes before our eyes. Whilst we are celebrating this IVth anniversary of the Arab Liberation Front, we are witness to the rising of a whole process aimed at the strangulation of future potentialities and their emprisonment in chains created by the tragic repetition of the errors preceding June 1967. It is also proved that plans for the liquidation of the Palestinian cause and the immobilization of Arab revolutionary forces are increasing. As a result of our Party's realizations, such as the nationalization of petrol operations in the North of Iraq and the positive evolution of the idea of unity between the various Palestinian resistance organizations, these forces are, however, today increasing in vigour. Young, vibrant elements are also rising in several provinces of the Arab homeland to carry the torch of the future and cry out the watchwords of resurgence.

The commemoration of this glorious event brings to mind more than one idea regarding militancy. We must take into consideration all these ideas, look on them as a new departure and an incitement to reveal the complete picture of the Arab struggle in its present day reality and also to define the levels to be attained by this struggle for it to become a match for dangers and hostile conspiracies.

The foundation of the Arab Liberation Front concretized a new idea advanced by our Party and inscribed by it in the final decisions of the IXth National Congress, where a clear analysis was made of the stage of history following the June defeat. In the introduction to the second part of the documents concerning strategy, as defined by the Congress, we read:

«We in no way exaggerate when we state that we are convinced that the stage through which we are at the

moment passing is a decisive one and involves our destiny... It is our duty, as a revolutionary movement, to analyse the conjuncture with fresh revolutionary logic and to make use of scientific schemas, capable of saving the Arab Nation, now on the verge of annihilation. Our privileged position at the centre of all popular Arab movements invests us with great responsibility, on which depends, not only the destiny of the Ba'th Party, but also that of the Nation as a whole. We must act radically and deeply in the treatment of all problems connected with our cause.»

After analysing the causes of defeat of June 1967, the documents concerning strategy of the current phase, recall the fundamental truth proclaimed constantly by the Party since its inception:

«Defeat has deep causes which are inherent in the reality of the Arab Nation itself; defeat illuminates the Arabs concerning the weak points of this reality and calls them, with force and determination to cure their weaknesses; this is an indispensable task for the survival of the Arab Nation.»

The report of the IXth Congress then insists on the disastrous failure of the Arab leaders and on their inability to elaborate a militant strategy with clearly-defined orientations. The report concludes:

«If we approached the conditions of the present crisis rationally, we would discover infallibly one of the most suitable methods to repulse foreign aggression—the establishment of a popular, national front. More than a hundred million Arabs would constitute a gigantic reserve, if well-prepared for battle. This is the basis of Arab strategy. It is in this idea—a long-drawn-out armed war of liberation—that we see a solution.»

The Arab Liberation Front was born as a concretization of this idea, and its manifesto states:—

«The previous phase did not permit the realization of

the Arab Revolution because its outer image did not then correspond to that which is its very essence —that of armed combat, led by the popular masses». Even if armed combats in fact took place, they were only partial and sporadic. Armed combat was in no way considered as «an inseparable characteristic of the Revolution, nor as one of its fundamental conditions».

The Arab Liberation Front has denounced incessant attempts to prevent the Arab Revolution from entering into a new phase by depriving strategy from recourse to armed combat, and by trying to circumscribe and reabsorb such combat by every possible means. The the Arab Liberation Front is characterized on the ideological and strategic plane by its ability to high-light all theoretical mistakes concerning the Palestinian cause and to denounce all methods, erroneous and destructive attitudes which have always been irresponsibly at play, and which are still at play with the Arab struggle and armed combat of the future.

The Arab Liberation Front manifesto states:—

«Arab regimes have always been careful to limit the Arab Revolution to Palestine», leaving to the Revolution no loop-hole for extension and attack on socio-political realities in the countries where these regimes are in power. These regimes, adds the manifesto, have recourse to the policy of limiting the Palestinian cause to Palestinians only, hiding behind a situation which allows them to protect themselves from any repercussions the Revolution may have on them. This attitude is not only attributable to certain Arab regimes. As the Arab Liberation Front manifesto indeed shows, certain Arab political movements of the Left are no different in this regard to the regimes in question. These movement «erect the whole of their pseudo-leftist policy, and their stubbornness in maintaining it, on a doubtful attitude of conspiracy with regard to those who desire to establish

organic links between the Palestinian cause and Arab unity. In accepting disunion and regionalistic methods of action, they only express their point of view with increased ambiguity».

The ideological perspectives of the Arab Liberation Front —based on the fact of a close relationship between the liberation of Palestine and the realization of unity (the Palestinian cause being a key factor in the Arab Revolution)— have gone beyond all other current ideologies, whose incomplete regionalistic or static vision is unable to grasp globally the dialectic nature of the Arab Revolution.

The Front states:—

«Palestine is the path to unity and unity is the path for Palestine... the Arab people will, henceforward, accept no form of unity if its primary objective is not the liberation of Palestine. Unity can only be achieved by the popular masses, their faces turned towards Palestine.»

Since the beginning of 1969, the Arab Liberation Front has thus hurled itself into the battle, fortified by a new ideology, opening up a new path for the Revolution, endowed with a national organization gathering together combattants from all over the Arab territories, and imbued with the ambition defined by Comrade 'Aflaq (in his introduction to the text entitled «The Strategy of the Confrontation of Zionism and Colonialism», adopted by the Xth National Congress), as follows:—

«In taking the initiative to found the Arab Liberation Front, the Party is not seeking to fill a gap, but to get rid of its ailments. It is seeking complete renewal; it is seeking a healthy resurgence, a serious ideological and militant re-birth. If we approach the Front with our old mentality, with our old ailments, the hoped-for renewal will never see the light of day... Indeed, militants of the Ba'th can have other activities within other organizations, but for the Front we want the most dependable

militants, because we wish to make of this Front the true Organization through which the Arab Revolution and the Party can renew itself and regain its strength.»

This IVth anniversary of the foundation of the Arab Liberation Front reminds us of other truths. The most important of these are that:

1. The foundation of the Arab Liberation Front in no way corresponded to a futile need to augment the number of already-existing organizations whose aim is the liberation of Palestine. On the contrary, it is a question of creating a new atmosphere in which the unification of already-existing organizations can be promoted and in which the perspectives of armed combat can be enlarged and given depth.

2. The creation of the Arab Liberation Front was a response to an objective necessity, to a long-felt need on an ideological, organizational and practical plane. This initiative corresponded to the beginning of a process in which could be foreseen both the exigencies of the particular phase of history and those of the struggle opposing the resurgent Arab Nation to forces of oppression which were hostile to its liberty, to its unity and to its development, as to the international revolutionary movement as a whole. These forces of oppression are Imperialism and Zionism; the lastnamed is a racist movement, the expression of certain complexes, of tyrannic interests, of the desire for revenge and of genocidal tendencies. Zionism is profoundly opposed to the march of history and to the natural evolution of humanity.

3. The unitary vision and the deep awareness of the danger of imperialo-Zionist conspiracies, together with the true dimension of the Palestinian cause, makes it possible for the Arab Liberation Front to take its place above all organizations of limited horizon whose impor-

tance is to be measured by the number of its members and those who militate in their name. The Front draws its significance and its strength from the future, the preparation of which it is undertaking.

The Front is a force which reveals the latent potential of the Arab masses. It is the expression of the Nation's will to live. It claims to rouse an immense revolutionary heaving, exempt from every form of regionalism, bureaucracy, autocracy and, at the same time, avoids the unhealthy and debilitating competitiveness in which Arab revolutionary forces sometimes indulge.

4. Just as all other organizations, of which the Party has confirmed the importance and the absolute necessity (and the Party states that it is indispensable to make of these organizations the source of a new spirit for the Arab Revolution), the Arab Liberation Front is still at the beginning of its way. It has not yet taken the form corresponding completely to the Ba'th's ambition. Like all other forces turned towards the future, which constitute the under-pinnings of this new phase and contribute to the armed struggle —such as the power represented by the working-class on the one hand and that of ideological and militant action on the other— the Arab Liberation Front is still suffering from birth-pangs. Dangers are many, obstacles are countless and conspiracies incessant, and this is normal, for its strength is the vital source from which will spring liberation, unity and socialism in the Arab homeland.

If the IVth anniversary of the birth of the Arab Liberation Front is of the greatest significance, this lies well and truly in the establishment of this verity and the awareness of its importance. In its light, all obstacles threatening the future of Arab revolutionary action and the growth-potential of the Revolution itself can be faced.

The martyrs of the Arab Liberation Front and all the

fighters who, throughout the width and breadth of the Arab homeland, accept the supreme sacrifice in defense of the national cause, together with the heroes who are the troops of the Front today and who represent in the eyes of the Arab people a concretization of the future, of hope, of determination and of heroism —discern in this anniversary of the birth of the Front, and its proclamation «The Revolution unto Victory», an opportunity to renew their solemn promise ever to continue on the path of sacrifice.

Those who follow this path are transformed into eternal symbols of our Nation's essential qualities —determination, will-power, confidence in themselves and in the future. They also symbolize the positive values created by civilization and are benefits for the whole human race.



## Chapter VII

# The Arab revolution and current projects for «liquidation»

According to the analysis made by the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party of the phase of history following the June defeat, this stage has been deemed the most revolutionary that Arab contemporary life has known. Strategies defined by the IXth and Xth Congresses have been adapted naturally to this conjunctures. The salient contradictions of the present period have thus the greatest likelihood of being resolved.

It is with this in mind that the Party considers the Palestinian cause as of primordial importance in the Arab struggle. It has developed the idea that there are dialectical links between unity and liberation; it has upheld the belief that we must always refer to the popular masses and count on them alone; they are the essential basis of the Revolution; they must be at the helm and direct the development of the present phase. The Party believes, besides, that armed combat is today the only method of action capable of responding to the exigencies of a face-to-face. Rigid, intellectual thought-processes and militant action-methods, based on regionalistic logic, hitherto exercised an influence on the popular masses; a pseudo-revolutionary verbal contro-

versy reigned throughout. Armed combat puts an end to all that. At the same time, it prevents the activity of those who are unable to concord their watchwords and their actions and those who hide their real intentions behind public declarations of faith.

The Palestinian cause today faces the last act, in which are unfolded projects for liquidation conceived by the Imperialist, Zionist and reactionary alliance. The dialectical links between unity and liberation are targets for attacks aimed at increasing disunion, sowing discord, reducing our strength to atoms, spreading defeatism and destroying the last nuclei held by the unionist fighting forces. Today the militant basis of the Arab revolutionary movement, the mass of workers and peasants, are undergoing redoubled attacks from forces hostile to socialism and to the Revolution in the Arab homeland. Armed combat encounters all manner of obstacles; attempts are made to fetter and to annihilate it. Old mental habits, outmoded methods of action which were already responsible for defeat, continue to rage.

In such circumstances, the most efficient arm for the Arab masses and patriotic, national and progressive forces throughout the Arab homeland is the clinging to a scientific, revolutionary spirit, the maintenance of a unionist attitude and preparation for battle. In this way, plots hatched by the Imperialist, Zionist and reactionary alliance will be foiled; local and international forces which undertake to put these plots into action, by the most variegated means, —as, for example, psychological intoxication campaigns— will be neutralized.

If we are concentrating our thoughts on the necessity «to hold on to scientific, revolutionary logic and to a unionist attitude, directed towards battle», it is because the political analysis now proposed and the tactics adopted have not yet reached a degree of maturity such as to enable combattant unity to be established, precisely

because scientific, revolutionary logic is not exploited deeply and with tenacity.

Even worse, ideas put forward and initiatives taken in the name of unity and of this logic have often not even the minimal qualities which would bring them up to the criteria of militancy at the present moment. It would be superfluous to make an inventory of the thoughts and tendencies expressing waves of despair and the undermining of will-power, playing the game of propaganda, which aims at putting in doubt the revolutionary aptitudes of the militant potential which the Arab masses constitute. These thoughts and tendencies all flow out into the sea of conspiracies aimed at the liquidation of the Palestinian cause.

On the other hand, it is our duty, in the face of the highly-preoccupying circumstances which the Arab Nation is facing, to make a balance-sheet of the ideological and scientific errors which may have escaped the attention of those responsible; these errors deviate national patriotic and progressive forces from the authentic militant line —the only one capable of evincing the dangers which threaten the very existence of these forces, and the only one capable of guaranteeing in the future the capacity to resist, the aptitude to make use of the restrictions of the current national conjuncture, while all the time remaining faithful to their own principles and assuming their responsibility concerning the Nation's destiny.

We find ourselves obliged to state that analyses of the present conjuncture, made in the name of scientific revolutionary logic, have no relation either to revolution or to a scientific approach. These analyses have only one merit; they perturb the ranks of progressive forces and prevent them from foiling the plans aiming at the liquidation of the Palestinian cause... The gravest example of these methods of thought and action we have to

combat is defeatism; this attitude of a purely formal, pseudo-scientific nature, which submits reality to traditional, dialectical schemas and where the repetition of empty words abound —words borrowed from the terminology belonging to social classes and their theoretical writing and previous experiences— satisfies the holders of this point of view. Used mechanically, this terminology reminds us more of a crossword-puzzle than serious, responsible analyses. Such an attitude, far-removed from any authentic dialectic, is rather to be assimilated to static, linear analyses and to the formal logic of Aristoteles.

These traditional analyses, which start with an incomplete, static vision of reality and of the main current contradictions, reach conclusions which are eminently regionalistic. Their authors capitulate to the logic of current forces. They show ignorance of the national dimension of all regional problems, an essential element at this stage. Blinded, they do not perceive the birth of these new forces which are surging from the very heart of the Arab reality at a time when that reality finds itself faced with challenges on every side, both from within and from without.

This ideological attitude, expressing a barely-veiled regionalism, contents itself with a purely formalistic class-analysis. In the name of revolution and scientific thought, it lets itself be carried away by spurious idealism. Principles congeal and the international revolutionary heritage is mummified and dogmatized. Instead of using this heritage as a guide for true revolutionary action, the tenants of these analyses advise erroneous and deceptive alternatives, which gravely endanger the unity of patriotic, national and progressive forces in the Arab homeland, and prevent any valid scientific analysis from gaining ground.

Leaving generalities behind, let us state that in each

province of the Arab homeland there is a common problem, that of the patriotic front and the principles from which the alliance between the various patriotic and progressive forces can be brought about. Some believe that the analysis of social classes will allow the denunciation and the removal of the most reactionary and most dangerous class, and that in such a way the alliance will take place between all the other classes. This alliance, which can become a reality in an enlarged socio-political context, corresponds to a necessity in the very nature of the conflict opposing us to the enemy and to the exigencies of revolutionary tactics. These tactics must take into consideration the distinction between that which is really dangerous and that which is not; they must prevent forces of the Right from grouping together and forming a block, for this would enable them to deal out blows to progressive and leftist forces. Others believe that, during this period when the Right constitutes a block and is re-grouping all its constituents, such a classification cannot be tolerated. The isolation of semi-feudalism, the national upper middle-class, and even the middle class, remains one of the exigencies of the patriotic and progressive fight led throughout the Arab homeland.

As for us, we believe that any analysis based on purely formalistic theoretical opinions, on abstract definitions, which are in no way the fruit of experience and reach conclusions and verdicts entirely foreign to the concrete, immediate reality, constitutes in our eyes a crushing factor for the progressive forces and a weakening of their potential, for they render ridiculous the efforts they deploy.

It is for this reason that we propose to act according to the following ideas and principles:—

1. In the first place, start from real, tangible, concrete ideas. This is the first step. It must not be

forgotten that concrete, tangible realities are not regional realities, isolated from the national conjuncture because the problem of Palestine which is the problem of all Arabs— is an essential factor of the problems peculiar to each country, to each regime, to all Arab political forces, no matter what their differences are concerning identity, the class to which they belong or their objectives.

2. Consequently, before going on to analyse class-structure, we must:—

a) gauge the importance of the role of each social class, while bearing in mind the level attained by the alliance and the solidarity binding forces of the Right together, on a regional and national scale.

b) gauge the degree of solidarity, co-operation, mutual assistance and planified action in common, between the various forces of the Left on a regional and national scale.

There, however, another primordial task is necessary, starting from a concrete and realistic analysis of present forces, through their links of a regional or national type. It is essential that the struggle for the establishment of a patriotic front on a regional scale should not be separated from that which must be led towards establishing a national, popular, militant front on a pan-Arab scale.

The Arab Left is called today to interest itself in all events appearing on the scene, irrespective of their importance, at the same time bearing in mind the Nation and the great Arab homeland as an indivisible whole. It must detect any plan aiming at the liquidation of the Palestinian cause; it must maintain its line of action and its orientation by a scientific, revolutionary analysis. Any rising militant force, wherever it is to be found within the Arab homeland, must enjoy the attention and the support of the Left. The Left must encourage the gathering together of all progressive nuclei and support

genuine revolutionary impulsions. In this way, all tendencies to innovation, all unitary upsurgings will become the exclusive assets of the progressive unionist, who stand together on the battle-field, sustained by a new revolutionary ideology corresponding to the exigencies of the fight. This ideology equally corresponds to the requirements of true revolutionary mobilization which concerns above all the basis —the mass of peasants and workers, soldiers and revolutionary intellectuals; it can adapt all the elements of social life to the exigencies of battle. It also ensures the transformation of the outmoded structures of Arab national life. It re-groups patriotic and progressive forces around a national revolutionary strategy, capable of establishing a new phase in the struggle, capable also of unshakable resistance and of a glorious confrontation of all plans for «liquidation».

3. In the present phase, the starting-point of all national action and all social struggle is, obligatorily, unity of the Left. Favourable conditions must be created for the Left to re-form around a minimal concerted programme, capable of enlarging in breadth and depth; without unity, we should speak in vain of the class-struggle or the fight for national liberty, for neither the struggle nor the fight could otherwise be seen as a grave and authentic issue.

Our greatest preoccupation, dominating all others, is the methods for re-forming the Left and unifying its different elements; for, let us repeat, any action, regardless of its orientation and regardless of splendid speeches and flowery declarations, would be useless without unity. Nothing would have a real basis; it would be like chaff in the wind.

Today the presidential elections in the United States have once again given the various «blocks» the chance to establish their policy, and the Imperialist-Zionist reactionary alliance has recovered its breath for a new

attempt to compromise the Arab future, and plans aiming at the liquidation of the Palestinian cause have been scrupulously prepared. All is in place for their application. Circumstances are propitious; the executors of these criminal projects are at hand. But the will of the Arab revolutionaries stands firm. Despite conspiracies and conspirators, despite plots and the hatchers of plots, despite the spirit of capitulation and defeatism, they will, with total determination, sound the echo of their historic will and proclaim the failure of hostile forces in the face of the ineluctible march of the Arab masses towards unity, freedom and socialism.

The revolutionary will of the Arab masses is submitting militant forces and the various constituents of the Left to a severe trial. It impels our scientific, revolutionary ideology to acquire the strength to face the challenge in which our destiny is at stake. It is a certainty that, in this appalling confrontation, their will and the logic of history will rise triumphant.



## Chapter VIII

# **The revolutionary movement confronted with the challenges of the present phase**

The rapid and unexpected development of science and technology, and the level of civilization attained by the world today, have clarified certain conditions and certain basic facts indispensable for successful action, regardless of its orientation or application, (whether it be revolutionary, non-revolutionary or counter-revolutionary action).

The primary, and most important condition, is the ability to grasp, in its totality, a particular given situation, taking into consideration the general international framework into which it fits, so that the nature of its structures and the laws governing it can be understood; equally, the ability to gauge the different currents of the conjuncture, to foresee political, cultural and socio-economic evolutions during a given period and be able to predict events and go beyond the problems of the moment, so that, fully aware of possible transformations, directions can be delineated and consequences subdued.

In this way, revolution in the contemporary world is no longer either a matter of faith or of enthusiasm: neither is it simply a reaction to a given, negative event

nor a spontaneous re-grouping of combative impulses. Revolution implies an analysis of the internal evolution of society and its relationship to the evolution of the contemporary world. Revolution implies knowledge, and it exacts a scientific approach, because it entails planification and rational organization, devoid of all formalism. It is a creative act. To be a revolutionary means being able to take initiatives of historic significance and having a deep sense of responsibility: it entails being forever resolute, ready for sacrifice, for endurance and self-forgetfulness.

Revolution cannot be genuine and worthy of its name unless, even imperfectly, all these conditions are united. It cannot co-habit with ignorance of laws governing the phase of history in which it takes place, nor of the social conflicts it is attempting to resolve. It can only transform reality if leaders, and the solid basis, through knowledge and the rules of conduct which they have adopted, show themselves capable of resolving objective contradictions, all the time respecting the march of history and the interest of the most highly revolutionary social classes.

No revolution in the world today can make sure of victory unless it is endowed with arms against which the enemy is powerless. The ambition of triumphal revolution is not the acquisition of the same arms and the same strengths as the enemy: triumphal revolution taxes its ingenuity to acquire arms unavailable to the enemy, to surpass him, to neutralize his power and to make his assets inoperative and unavailing.

The revolutionary Arab movement was able to launch on this scientific, revolutionary path when it acquired:

- a revolutionary ideology
- a pan-Arab organization
- the means to develop popular strife and to undertake armed combat.

As a result of its ideology, the Arab revolutionary

movement has been able to derive an exact, scientific picture of reality, taking into account the general framework of the evolution of the contemporary world and the ideologies dividing it. By establishing a national organization, it has been able to develop on sound basic principles, the path of revolutionary unity —the only possible way decisively to bring disunity to an end. Regionalistic logic has been surpassed, methods of grouping together unresolved problems and co-ordinating deeply— opposed contradictions —which, in the long run, perpetuate division— have been removed. Through its adherence to the principle that action belongs above all to the masses, the Arab revolutionary movement puts its stakes on the only historic power capable of palliating the nation's weaknesses and the disbalance in the battle opposing it to the Imperialist-Zionist reactionary alliance. In this way, the balance can weigh in the Revolution's favour.

Certain weak points, however, certain defects, and certain lacunae have escaped notice and have affected and hindered the progress of the movement. Mistakes have opened breaches enabling negative elements to have their way. The extension of plans hostile to revolution, the infiltration of counter-revolutionaries into the very heart of the movement and its consequent deterioration, are among these factors of self-evident gravity.

The Arab revolutionary movement's inability to grasp the considerable importance of its own ideology, to study its mainsprings and develop them to the maximum, certainly constitutes one of its gravest imperfections. Nothing, has so far been done to delineate the content and the bearing of new concepts of unity, liberation, socialism: the methodical study of theoretical precepts has not been undertaken: consequently, with vulgarization out of the question, the masses have had no access to ideology.

On the other hand, there has been no definition of Arab revolutionary strategy. The interaction of the various aspects of revolutionary action (theory, strategy and practise) has never been established, and the balance governing this interaction has not been found. This hiatus has facilitated deviations and internal misrepresentation.

Another of the movement's weaknesses was caused by the absence of any opening to international revolutionary thought and by the fact that the movement had not managed to incite sufficient interest in the Arab world, particularly as far as innovations in the Third World and the ideology of the new Left, were concerned.

Errors and weaknesses were, however, not only of an ideological nature. They have not been absent from an organizational level throughout the quarter of a century already covered by the Arab militant campaign. The preponderance of formalism and the excessive use of traditional criteria, have encouraged regionalistic tendencies, subjective relationships and power-dealings. The movement took an insufficient interest in the revolutionary, social structures of the Party and centred its efforts inadequately on the working-class: because of this, it found itself unable to respond to the ever-increasing requirements conflict imposed, and revealed itself in the end to be in discord with its own principles.

The movement, also, only succeeded partially in mobilizing, organizing and awakening the people, so failing to establish sound and stable links with the revolutionary advance-guard and the masses. In fact, only such links could offer satisfactory resistance to opportunism and adventurism: they alone would be in a position to preserve the movement from any action-methods foreign to popular struggle. It is evident that the failure of the movement to reach fulfilment, to clarify its ideology and perfect its organization (which would

have enabled it to respond to the necessities of the fight opposing the Arab Revolution to a well-organized enemy, armed with ultramodern equipment, acting methodically, and with unlimited interests and ambitions in the Arab homeland) is linked to the conjugated presence of under-development and disunion, and in the continuation of non-revolutionary intellectual schemas and action-methods at the very heart of the revolutionary movement itself.

It should also be stated that yet another factor which has undermined the movement, lowered its potential and severed it from its historic sources —there where it could indeed have drawn its strength— was due to the fact that in the eyes of the masses, it had never entered into a serious and audacious chapter of self-criticism. The people found themselves removed from the truth, uninformed of the exigencies of the struggle for unity, freedom and socialism, non-participant in the annihilation of hostile projects aimed at their very lives. Destructive forces made the most of this weakness: pockets of reactionaries and adventurers, which had managed to form at the heart of the movement, were able to carry out their sabotage mission: they shook the Arab revolutionary movement to its foundations, damaging its ideology, its organization and striking at the popular masses. Discrediting campaigns took place, and conspiracies hatched on a vast scale, with method and ferocity: the aim of all this was the destruction of revolutionary structures, the deforming of their essence and their reduction to a heap of contradictions. Paralysed, these structures would fall away of their own momentum. The internal crises shaking the movement would prevent them having any real impact on events. It would linger on in fear and apathy. At the same time, ostentatious slogans would abound; but their aim would in no way be the filling of such and such a gap, the curing of such and

such a weakness: neither would it point to methods of cure nor to factors encouraging a recovery of strenght.

These are the reasons the Arab nation suffered the defeat of June 5th, 1967, and found itself facing a new phase in its history. The logic prevailing and the errors made were denounced and rejected. It is our party, the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, which bears the main responsibility for the inadequacy of action-methods. It is the Party's desire to become the artisan of the reabsorption of the crisis now tearing the Arab revolutionary movement apart. But this is only possible if the Party begins with itself, and on condition that it cures its weaknesses; it will only be in a position to assume its responsibilities if transformed into a veritable revolutionary fortress, through its ideology and its organization, able to gather together all the militants of the Arab homeland and give them the chance to acquire determination and invulnerability to a marked degree, and to delineate for them the path of revolution. The movement must bar the way to all forms of sabotage, to all conspiracies fomented by the Imperialist-Zionist reactionary alliance, conceived to undermine the Arab nation and its revolution, and above all, our own Party. For this to come to pass, we must go back to the sources of our history, for it is there that the Arab revolutionary movement can find its strength.

### *1. The Ideological Combat*

The movement must go deep into the sources of Arab revolutionary ideology. According to specific critical methods it must study and elaborate tactics capable of aiding its evolution. Campaigns must be undertaken with a view to eliminating all vestiges of bourgeois thinking, of regionalistic tendencies, and opportunities

for despotism and profiteering. Such campaigns can promote real ideological unity, and through them, a homogeneous method for approaching strategic and ideological problems can be invented. They can increase and deepen our awareness of crises shaking the movement and help us to gauge the exigencies of Arab revolutionary action in the present phase. They will also provide an opening to international revolutionary ideology. They will put an end to the destructive activities of those who abide by schemas incapable of adaptation to Arab Revolution and its ideology.

## *2. National Organization*

The ideology of the Arab Revolution is the theoretical basis on which National organization, which is the living concretization of this ideology, can be rebuilt. Because the Arab revolutionary movement omitted to pay sufficient attention to its ideology, national organization has suffered. It has been neglected to such an extent that it has diminished into a network of routine relationships of a formal nature, incapable of responding to the exigencies of unitary ideology and to the necessities of an arduous struggle to counter disunion.

Of all the sectors of the Arab Revolution, our Party alone has been able to safeguard national organization; but attacks led methodically against the Ba'th have been highly detrimental to its organization, to its leaders, to its structures and to its internal relationships, thereby considerably diminishing its efficiency.

Our Party has come through many crises. It has never wavered. It has maintained its strength, but it is covered with wounds. One absolute necessity, if we are to avoid such crises, is the nurturing of the fundamental

instrument of militant combat, peculiar to Arab revolution. It must be developed, not only on a Party-scale, but equally on the scale of the Arab Nation in its entirety, endeavouring particularly to create a popular national front throughout the Arab homeland. It is equally necessary to activate campaigns denouncing regionalistic tendencies, the withdrawal of each region into itself, bureaucratic tendencies which identify themselves in certain cases with their own idea of national organization—a mechanical and abstract one, which looks on militants as soul-less pawns, not as human-beings fighting for a cause. These militants, in fact, are battling for Man and for the Nation, for the future of Man and the whole human race; they have great responsibilities in history. By assuming these responsibilities, they will be the artisans of one of the most remarkable of human realizations, the felling of disunion, the removal of under-development, of imperialism, Zionism, class-exploitation and reaction.

The problems of national organization can only be attacked efficiently and skilfully if our attempts are rooted in deep and sincere belief in unity. Faith and action are dialectically connected: this implies that national organization must be the concretization of the idea of unity and its true reflection, bearing in mind most particularly that at no moment in their history have Arabs so much needed to unite.

Unity, we repeat cannot be dissociated from the primary cause of the Arab Revolution, that of liberation, which will assail defeatist projects and conspiracies hatched against Palestine and the Arab hegemony of the Arabian Gulf. This unity whose ultimate aim is liberation, is today the target of various tentatives towards belittlement, falsification and of conspiracy, which can only be refuted and opposed, efficiently and decisively, by a national, revolutionary organization—in fact, by



the Ba'th. Our Party is in urgent need of our care and efforts. We must seek out every weakness and cure it by truly revolutionary methods. Victory over disunion will begin to become a reality when this primordial task is accomplished, when, fortified by unified ideology and strategy in which tendencies and attitudes are harmonized, a national organization is established. Such an organization would be in a position to direct the battle efficiently, to close the doors on despair, foresee reversal and defeat, and place the Arab Nation on its future road.

Our Party has followed this path for the third of a century. It is the most capable —and therefore the most responsible— of thrusting open the gates of hope, of self-confidence, of faith in the ineluctable victory of the Arab people —this people we must engage in the true combat.

### *3. Struggles of the People*

The riches of our Nation's past remain unexploited, but the proletarian masses are effervescent. They are the ones who constitute the real arm of national revolutionary ideology and national organization. By adhering to the line of popular strife, our Party has given the Arab revolutionary movement the opportunity to realize, early on, that the Palestinian cause could never be won by traditional methods. Armed combat is the only means for the popular masses to confront triumphantly the forces launched against our homeland with the intention of exploiting us, dividing us, pillaging our resources and usurping our lands. The dialectical links between the ideology of revolution and its executors has, from the beginning, been a matter of great preoccupation for the revolutionary advance-guard. This is no doubt due to the fact that the very genuineness of the ideology has helped

us to understand that our era is that of the popular masses, the rebellious masses of Africa, of Asia and Latin America. It has also shown us that unity can only be achieved by the masses and that the enemies of unity are all the social levels expressing class-interests contrary to those of the proletarian masses.

The role of the popular masses has never been properly evaluated. Attempts to mobilize and organize them, to give them arms and knowledge, have remained inadequate. These same masses, who unified struggles, from the Gulf to the Ocean during the fifties, became the victims and the prisoners of socialistic straightjackets from the early sixties. This expulsion of the masses from political life had disastrous results on the movement. Reversals and defeats were countless, for counter-revolutionary forces were enabled to rage freely for many years.

The return to the masses is a process which can help to increase ideological impact and bring to fruition the Arab revolutionary organization. This return must take place methodically and in full awareness. It springs from an elementary truth, plain common-sense:— the popular masses ensure the Arab Nation's superiority over its enemies. By knowing how to make use of this arm and by continually increasing its efficacy, we shall bring about a decisive turning-point in the phase of history through which the Nation is passing.

Sociologists, statisticians, and researchers as a whole, of imperialist and Zionist allegiance, are studying and forecasting the socio-political evolution of the Arab homeland during the next ten years. On the basis of these studies, our enemies will elaborate projects and define the strategy most suitable to the alliance they already form with the reactionary elements in the Arab homeland and which will be developed particularly in the years to come.

The enemy has been able to turn to his advantage the

salient events of the previous phase. He has known how to make the most of the Arab revolutionary movement's weaknesses and deficiencies, and succeeded as ever in the past, in finding allies to combat the Arab revolutionary movement from within. Should he also be allowed to make the most of the events of the phase to come?

We are now better able to understand our responsibilities and to define our historic tasks. We must return to the mainsprings of our strength; we must implacably suppress defeatist tendencies and weaknesses: we must build the Arab Revolution on stable historic bases. The National Congresses of the Ba'th adopted this appropriate path when they called militants to prepare for battle, to transform every sector of the Arab nation into so many citadelles of resistance to the enemy, in so many assault-posts. For the Party Congresses, this was the fundamental principle of all strategy and for every phase. Any attempt to deviate the Arabs from this path is a denial of the correct and healthy revolutionary line laid down.

1972



## Chapter IX

# **A critical study of an article by Sa'dûn Hammâdî «Unity and historic responsibility»**

The seventh issue of the review «Dirâsât 'Arabiyya» (Arab Studies) has recently published an article by Dr. Sa'dûn Hammâdî, entitled «Unity and Historic Responsibility». The author proposes to make a study of extremely serious problems, but the style and analytic method adopted, differs little from those of certain others who, following the defeat of June 5th, 1967, served an irrepressible surge towards unity but had learned no lesson from defeat.

As the article approaches problems directly concerning the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, it is indispensable to analyse the points of view and judgments emitted, and, if necessary, reveal their imperfections when objectivity is manifestly absent or when the most elementary principles of scientific logic are contradicted.

We propose to make a meticulous study of this article, in order to reveal to the reader the contradictions and ideological errors which it incorporates. We shall remain faithful to its construction.

1. The article starts with a denegation stating that «theoretical problems would not be considered», whereupon, from beginning to end, the author indulges in an ideological analysis, at the end of which he is confirmed as the mouth-piece of a purely nationalistic theory, i.e. a non-socialist nationalism similar to that extolled by Arab Nationalists during the fifties.

This prefatory statement being simply a matter of form, we have undertaken a critical study of the article. On page 13, we read:—

«One of the most serious theoretic errors is doubtless due to the fact that the unitary cause was placed on the same footing as the socialist cause. Watchwords such as, “No unity without socialism”, and, “No socialism without unity” —as well as all the other antithetical figures of speech that an ideology assumes— were, without a doubt, responsible for this mistake.»

Such logic plunges us into the atmosphere of the time of Sâti Al-Husarî, with its abundance of abstract, inconsistent concepts of unity, devoid of all social content. During this time, unitary theory had no dialectical perspective of social realities, human components and social classes.

This type of concept is obviously a dis-service to the cause it claims to support, in the same way that socialist, non-nationalist theories express regionalistic or abstract internationalistic tendencies, in total ignorance of the national phenomenon and total lack of interest in the principle of Arab unity as a national objective.

The links between unity and socialism are of an internal, organic nature. Such links correspond to the interests of the proletarian masses, and of our people. They are not, as the author of the article states, «a simple antithetical figure of speech assumed by an ideology».

2. With the intention of clarifying his approach, the author states, on the one hand, that he will speak only of unity in the present context, i.e. as the only way of resolving the national crisis: but he then continues: «our opinions on these matters will only be inspired by ideas drawn from impressions and information regarding certain aspects of unity realized in 1958 between Egypt and Syria, and their evolution. We shall also evoke the Charter of April 17th which has remained without effect».

The author, however, soon finds himself restricted by the temporal limitations he has assigned himself, for he later states: «it is the revolutionary Arab movement and the progressive regimes which the movement has succeeded in establishing in certain Arab countries which constitute the subject of our discussion».

We easily perceive the author's intentions to reach an evaluation of the positions adopted by the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party concerning unity. Without a word of introduction, that evaluation has been reached. «I belong among those who think that the Arab revolutionary movement or, at least, the most important component of the movement (the Ba'th Party, naturally) are to a considerable extent responsible to history for the failure to achieve unity in 1958».

It is legitimate to ask the reason why.

The reply contents itself with evocations and impressions. In this way, the responsibility of the Ba'th in the matter of secession lies simply in the fact that the Party had joined the ranks of those who adopted a critical, sceptical attitude with regard to unity. Thus the Party was psychologically prepared for defeat and it was on this account that it found itself involved in controversies and conflicts with the UAR: in consequence it let itself slither into a battle for power with those in authority.

This analysis contains two errors, both on the level of

impressions and information. The Ba'th Party never held a critical, sceptical attitude concerning unity. Its positive, critical attitude concerning the Government of the UAR sprang from a deep desire to safeguard unity. The Party at no time abandoned its position, in spite of the waves of repression hurled at it, as at all the other friendly political parties whose very existence was incontestable.

We only have to read Chapter IV of «The Evolution of Arab Revolutionary Ideology»\* to discover precisely the attitude of the Ba'th concerning the Government of the UAR. We shall limit ourselves to two proofs given in this chapter.

a) The extract from the conference delivered by Michel 'Aflaq, Secretary-General of the Ba'th, at Rabat during his visit to Morocco in May, 1960: —«Even if mistakes are made, unity is stronger than anything else and is capable of rectifying those mistakes».

b) The decisions of the IVth National Congress of the Ba'th, held in September, 1960, defining the political line adopted by the Party concerning the UAR\*\*.

— The Congress felt it a duty to denounce the non-benevolent criticism made by colonialists and reactionaries whose interests are aligned to those of regionalism and which encourage tendencies towards «provincialistic unity», and therefore fragmentation.

— To alert public opinion and encourage it to exert pressure on the Government of the UAR to correct its mistakes.

— To demand ferociously democratic liberty and popular participation —such participation guaranteeing unity from the danger of falling back into «provincialism».

\* Work by Elyâs Farah, 2nd Edition, p. 153 (in Arabic).

\*\* «The Evolution of Arab Revolutionary Ideology», p. 116.



After the secession, the Party never ceased to brandish the watchword «re-establishment of unity». Its fidelity to unitary, revolutionary positions, at the time of the UAR and also after the secession, exposed it to injustice and oppression. However, it was able to resist, in spite of the temptations offered to induce it to adopt, as did many others, unconsidered, reactionary attitudes.

3. The article then proposes to study the causes of the failure of the Charter of April 17th; here, the author's enthusiasm for the unitary cause is conjugated with an emotion that he has difficulty in hiding, in the face of certain positions defended by the Ba'th, in which he cannot find his bearings. It is, in fact, difficult to impute to him an attitude favourable to regionalistic tendencies. The author omits to mention the following facts:

a) The authorities in power, particularly in the Syrian province of the UAR, completely dominated the Party, and it is, therefore, illogical to impute to the Ba'th the responsibility for errors committed by these authorities.

b) Tense relationships between the Party and the authorities in power continued and their gravity was such that divergencies appeared irreconcilable. The conflict deteriorated into open war, and on 23rd February, 1966, the shattering of the bonds between the two parties finally took place. However, the author of the article continues to qualify the «coup d'Etat» of 23rd February as a «revolutionary movement» and to consider the Party as being at the origin of the «coup d'Etat». Commenting the attitude adopted by the authors of the «coup d'Etat» during the battle of June 5th (i.e. the fact that they delivered up the GOLAN, without a fight), he writes: «In this way, the revolutionary movement is traversing a new phase in which its unitary objectives and its real anti-unitary attitudes, are in contradiction. There are no

doubts to be had about this new phase: to stay in power is more important than the realization of unity, more important than the earth of the homeland. This is now an irrefragable truth».

c) On the other hand, the author can be reproached with taking certain subjective criteria and certain personal opinions as axioms. He states: «Every unitary element moved by sincere feelings, must remain loyal to unity, place it above every other consideration and refuse to endorse the errors of his partners at the heart of unity, so condoning actions contrary to the latter's interest». However, the conclusions he draws from this true affirmation are strange and erroneous. The Ba'th Party stands accused as the cause of the failure of unity, while in fact there was neither consultation nor co-ordination between the Party and the Government of the UAR. It is notorious that the latter refused any form of collaboration, and no distinction is made between the attitude of the Party and that of the authorities placed in power in Syria after March 8th. If we follow the author's reasoning, the Party had to make a choice between:

— Closing its eyes to the mistakes made by the Government of the UAR, while, in fact, these errors favoured to a large extent, the secession and gave to colonialism and the reaction the opportunity to assail unity, with all the more ferocity in that the Government of the UAR had attacked popular progressive unitary organizations, which constituted the true bases of unity.

— Allowing itself to be accused of secessionism and scepticism towards unity.

This parcial, subjective attitude seems to give the author the opportunity to let himself go. He pours out his fury against the Ba'th which had, in fact, adopted a positive, critical attitude, and had endured, with dignity, all manner of iniquities, maintaining, when necessary, a

courageous silence, dictated by its desire to safe-guard unity at all costs, and deliberately ignored the errors of those who had led the unitary march astray, almost to the edge of catastrophe. The Party had also felt it wiser to close its eyes to the authors of the crime of secession, who were guilty not only of decapitating unity but also of attempting to destroy the Ba'th.

4. Salâh Jadîd's clan, who were responsible for the failure of the Charter of April 17th and author of the «coup d'Etat» of February 23rd, which gave him absolute control of all State machinery, remains for the author of the article, the Left's representative. The mistakes and cruelties committed by this clan are, as a result, attributed to the Left's policy. We read:

«The war of June has proved the non-pertinence of subsisting doubts. The beliefs of the Left have been proved erroneous.»

The article goes further than this, for he refers to the clan as if it represented the Ba'th Party and makes the Party responsible for its actions and attitudes. The author would appear to be making a collection of this type of mistake, so offering an incomplete and superficial optic of things, from which truth is absent, as events themselves have shown. To claim that Salâh Jadîd's clan was an emanation of the revolutionary Arab movement is a real wager, for his revisionistic views, his cowardice, and his conspiracies, situate him rather as a gang than as a political party.

5. The author, when explaining away the June defeat, barely takes into consideration objective factors, and insists on subjective elements. He states:

«Most of the revolutionary directorates had been won over by personal ambitions, the lust for power, and by dominating instincts which encouraged them to fight for

themselves and to become hindrances for the Nation's unity.»

This is an incontestable fact, about which there is nothing to be said. But, by limiting arguments to subjective factors, the problematic is enclosed in a vicious circle, where the true nature of authority, in a context of division, remains undefined. Authority, unless taking the form of a genuine popular revolution, led by a real unitary party, and drawing its strength from the masses, can only be of a regionalistic nature; and regionalistic power —here we are dealing with an objective fact and not an «impression»— always implies resignation and adaptation to regional factors, characterized by contradictions and special conjunctures bound up with the condition of disunion.

Political directorates can not, therefore, be revolutionary unless they act in the name of unitary perspectives, unless they depend on a unitary organization and unless regional power is placed at the service of the Revolution. Such directorates who had been caught by the lust for power, had, in this way, prevented the realization of unity. They were inhabited by neither revolutionary feelings nor convictions.

6. Those who are animated by these unconscious feelings —which cannot have arisen out of nothing— find themselves impelled, according to the article, to a gradual sliding towards anti-unitary positions. There must obligatorily be a cause and an explanation of their existence and origins. The author, however, knows nothing of this and, according to him, it is these very sentiments which are the root of all evils. This way of passing absolute unmitigated judgements is transmitted in a style in which exhortations and sermons abound. We find a plethora of expressions such as «we must...», «it is necessary for this to be...», «I am convinced...»,

«we are obliged...», «and each one of us must reflect», which take the place of objective, scientific analysis of the phenomena concerned.

7. After speaking of the defeat of June 5th, in relation to the situation following defeat (which was one of the most dramatic situations a nation could ever know), the author asks, «How can revolutions and revolutionary regimes renounce to unity»; and «how could one imagine that these regimes would accept the fact that the Arab Nation could reach this situation born from defeat».

This passage demonstrates how the author avoids the causality of the problems he raises and how he neglects to question the nature of these established regimes. Yet it has been proved —and this has become an incontestable fact, and an elementary truth— that these regimes were the direct cause of defeat. Nobody, even among the simplest people, is unaware of this fact, and it appears strange to make abstraction of it.

Instead of linking this situation of the greatest gravity (from which we are still suffering) to its true causes (in the first place, the regimes in power), instead of turning towards the popular masses and their revolutionary advance-guard, to seek the path of true unity and the means of realizing it, by putting pressure on these regimes and by forcing them to follow the will of the people, the author appears to put his confidence in these regimes, is surprised that they have gone so far as to accept the destiny which has fallen to us since defeat, and questions their resignation, while in his eyes, to their unionist spirit there is not the shadow of a doubt.

Any simple Arab citizen could give him the answer, even though he knows nothing of the intricacies of political and ideological dialogue. He would say, in the words of an old Arab proverb: «One cannot give away

what one does not possess», and he would add that it is ridiculous to expect that regimes submitted to regionalism can make us the present of unity...

The author's simples-mindedness is even more evident when he asks: «How could one imagine that these regimes would accept the fact that the Arab Nation could reach this situation born of defeat, simply in order that certain individuals shall remain in power?» If one was unable to imagine such a thing, there must clearly have been a serious lack of information or else a lack of judgement, for, after all, the essential characteristics of these regimes was, precisely, the prevalence of personal power over public interest.

8. The author goes on to ask «what we, Arabs, can do to defend our existence and that of our homeland if we do not seek, in our turn, to become powerful by establishing a strong, unified State in the region».

Like all those who adopt this type of logic, the author is asking a question to which he will never know the answer. As long as he, and the likes of him, keep their eyes on anti-unitary regimes, dialoguing with them and expecting from them the solution, they will harvest neither power nor real development without unity», and masses.

Unity is itself a revolution, and it can only come about as the result of a revolutionary process. It is one of the most difficult revolutions imaginable because it braves all the enemies of the Nation, whether internal or external. The author refuses to believe that unity has enemies from within. He does not proceed to make a scientific analysis of classes when approaching social problems: stationary, he waits for unity to descend from the heaven of these regimes —a heaven thick with rainless clouds for the time being.

For Zionists and imperialists present in the region,

the most redoubtable and the most immediate danger is unity. It threatens the very foundations of their existence and it is for this reason that it represents a major interdiction. The battle they are engaging against unity is for them a matter of life or death, and every arm on which they can lay their hands is put into the service of battle against every aspect of unity. Arab regimes have no hope of winning this battle unless they are truly revolutionary; in other words, unless they base themselves on unitary ideology, on unitary organization, unless they adopt unitary strategy and unless political authorities are truly equal to the historic tasks awaiting them.

9. The author is absolutely correct, and even worthy of our admiration, when he states that there «can be neither power nor real development without unity», and that «this is an elementary truth». But while making this statement, he neglects two questions of the highest importance:

— Why are these elementary facts concerning unity never applied?

— How could they be applied one day? In fact, why and how?

Here, the analysis stagnates and closes itself in a vicious circle. Unity is a struggle, not a hope for something that we would like to see come to fruition one day, thanks to the priesthood of disunion.

The author, while prolix when he speaks of elementary facts, becomes remarkable succinct when it comes to resolving the complex processes which transform these facts into taboos: his attitude is sentimental, quasimystical concerning unity. For him, it is a kind of powder or a fairy wand or Moses' rod...

It is he himself, however, who states: «The desired stability can only become reality if a strong, united Arab State succeeds in creating internal structures which are

stronger than adventurist aims, stronger than the immediate desires of political groups to get into power, and this must take place by the most rapid possible means—the «coup d'Etat». Unity alone is capable of ending the conflicts opposing Arab States, which disunion aggravates and prolongs».

But how can this be achieved? Who would be its artisan if the regimes in which the author places his hopes and confidence, are born out of «coups d'Etat» exploits, conflicts, and are nourished by disunion itself?

10. The idea of «a complex and the lust for power» is not enough to explain why Arab regions do not unite. The real problem is, «Why do the provinces dominated by this power complex not unite?» Not to realize this brings in its train the serious errors contained in this article. The hope that unity can be obtained out of disunion is rather like trying to extract iron from wood. The author shows astonishment that States and provincialist regimes do not unite. But how could this take place? Their very nature is in contradiction with unity, and fundamentally opposed to it. Who can exact that these clans, these forces, these social classes, who draw their strength from disunion, should become one and the same? How can one expect to obtain from them realizations which, seen from their point of view, are against Nature. Is not this world which the author invites us to fathom simply a world of fantasy? Are we not being drawn into a cavalcade, behind a world of fantasy?

11. As far as the idea of a single party is concerned, it is now generally accepted as unpracticable, and our Party has undertaken to create a front in which solidarity between the different parties is maintained. The IXth and Xth National Congresses of the Ba'th insisted on the



principle of concerted action within established fronts, on a regional and national scale.

As far as this matter is concerned, however, the article lacks precision. It is impossible to say whether, for example, the author, by refusing the unique party system, implies criticism of the formula previously adopted, which was the origin of internal divisions at the heart of the revolutionary Arab movement, or whether he is aiming at something else.

In any case, what is the point of discussing parties in a vague and abstract fashion (taking no account of their nature, without examining their structures, their organization or their ideology, and without questioning their regionalistic or provincial tendencies)? This can never in any way be of service to the cause of unity, so enthusiastically defended by Dr. Hammâdi.

12. We do not understand the grounds for comparisons made by the author between the Ba'th Party on the one hand (the party the author himself admits to be still on the threshold of action aiming at the realization of its historic objectives —unity, freedom and socialism— and which has, in spite of handicaps and difficulties, been able to trace the path for the Arab Revolution), and, on the other hand «the popular Revolution which has already attained its objectives» and «the Soviet Union and the international revolutionary heritage...» Such comparisons only minimize the role of the Ba'th Party, impair its ideology and put in doubt its capacities. Other strange comparisons and other imprecise proposals (still under the pretext of criticising the one-party system) in fact, only lapidate the movement which is the standard-bearer of unitary ideology and our expression of its will. The author is attacking this movement, whose innovating, scientific ideology has opened up the way for the revolutions of the Third World, whose national organi-

zation has been able to go beyond dis-union, and which has brought about the first real geo-human unity in the Arab homeland.

The article, however, distributes «Unitary good conduct certificates» and decorations to certain Arab governments who are, for the author, a new hope since the proclamation of tri-partite unity\*.

13. One of the other defects of the article is the confusion of public opinion with popular movements, and scepticism as far as the masses, their degree of awareness and the role they are capable of playing, are concerned. Doubt in their potential is so considerable that dictatorship would almost appear justified. We read:—

«It would be a serious error to consider that conditions indispensable to unity imply that the majority of citizens should express their desire for it by direct universal suffrage. In fact, unity is an ideal, based on the highest of irrefutable and incontestable values: any vote concerning unity would be superfluous».

The idealism of the author can be perceived in this premise which takes no account of the interests of the masses and introduces an artificial contradiction, a purely imaginary division, between values and interests. The author goes on to say:—

«The awakening of colonized populations first appears among minorities and expresses the deep aspirations of these people. Their unity can only depend upon, and become established by, the vote of majority».

Here the world is turned upside down. It is not the small groups but the masses which present a problem. He speaks as if the regimes sought unity while the masses refused it.

\* Between Egypt, Syria and Lybia (Editor's note).

Continuing his course in the fashion of Bismarck, the author adds:—

«The opposition between deep aspirations and those expressed by a majority vote is one of the thorniest problems in the art of politics. The dangers in this matter are considerable, for, according to the choice made, dictatorship is sometimes justifiable».

In this way, the author takes the liberty of replacing the dictatorship of a single party by the dictatorship of a single individual, against the interests of parties and those of the masses.

14. All that is left for us to say is that it is strange and astonishing that the cause of unity, despite all the experience the struggle for unity has known, should be stated in such a way; the author betrays a pronounced existentialist, sentimental attitude, mingled with emotional reactions, (due to repression), which constantly filter through.

The author makes abstraction of the historic unitary movement which has evolved through the different phases of Arab contemporary life: he neglects the ideology which has justly proved to be the organic link between unity, freedom and socialism. This ideology, however, is clearly expressed in the strategies defined by the IXth and Xth National Congresses of the Ba'th Party, as well as in the writings of the Secretary General of the Party, Comrade Michel 'Aflaq, published over a year ago. One of its applications is precisely the unitary attitude which characterizes the policy followed in Iraq after the Revolution of July 17th up to the last stage. This policy and the ideological writings mentioned are all based on the fact that unity is considered, in the present phase, as the only scientific response to the colonialist-Zionist challenge. It identifies itself with the true revolution, for it implies the establishment of democracy and

the edification of socialism. It is the path of liberation and, finally, the free choice of the popular masses.

During the present phase, the Party can tolerate no separation of unity from its content, which is liberation. Unity can only be militant; otherwise it has no consistency, bringing together contrary elements likely, at any moment, to undermine the whole process of unification. Unity between anti-unitary regimes can only be effected by pressure from the masses. In no way, can unity be conceived without popular struggle, and without the path traced by these struggles ensuring ever-increasing development. In short, no form of unity is possible without a series of transformations taking place, breaking asunder structures born from dis-union and putting an end to the separatist view and even to the very existence of the various regions established *de facto*.

Without popular democracy, without popular revolutionary struggles, announcing the final assault against colonialism and Zionism, we shall only dream of unity without any scientific idea of its reality.

This is the first lesson we can learn from the defeat of June 1967.

1972

## Chapter X

# The Generation of Nationalization and Liberation\*

Today, in a spirit of joy, each of us reaps the fruit of his own labour. Intoxicated with the joy of success, our beloved students walk up one after another to the platform and receive their diplomas, earned by long years of work and perseverance.

The members of their families present here follow them with their eyes, and dare not to believe what they see. Their professors, these skillful artisans, are at this moment feeling the joy a worker feels before the product of his work, that of a peasant before his harvest, and that of an artist at the moment of creation and invention.

The Revolution, that of July 17, 1968, the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, artisan and guide of this Revolution, all the patriotic and progressive forces in the country, the militant alliance between the Arab and Kurd nations, in short, all the forces of progress directed toward good and working for the prosperity of the country, welcome this event with pleasure, since it is loaded with meanings which go well beyond those generally comprised in academic traditions.

\* Speech given at Al Mawsil University, at the closing of the academic year, June 20, 1972.

This event is a window which opens onto the future. It is the symbol of a new birth: that of many generations of new workers. Rich possibilities for hope and a variety of capabilities have appeared. The evolution, the growth and the resistance of the individual and of society as a whole have been affirmed.

This celebration is a pause where work finds its recompense, where learning meets with life, the university and society. The joy of the individuals and the institutions has become one with that of the entire nation. Divided and exploited, the proletarian and under-developed nations consider that their desire to struggle will be reinforced in the future. The future is the very essence of their existence and their presence in history depends upon it.

This academic tradition bestows great joy, overwhelming everyone —parents, students with degrees, professors, members of the administration and their leader, the dean— as well as the entire society, with the atmosphere of festivity which, at one and the same time, brings to mind the solemnity of prayer, the rationality of organized matters and the sumptuousness of marriage. Memories, dreams and hopes are here joined together.

Who among us, among the professors of the university, would not on this occasion remember the celebration at the end of the academic year when, his studies finished, he thus left student life? Were these celebrations anything other than splendid and happy dreams for those who have just finished their studies? Those who will still continue their studies no doubt direct all their hopes toward the near future, toward that happy moment at which they would like to quickly arrive, where they would be able to stand in the highly-coveted place of those who, today, are celebrating their success.

We congratulate all those present here for their work and wish that, in this joy, each one of them will be able

to feel the pleasure of these memories, dreams and hopes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this eternal city, Al-Mawsil\*, which in the past served as a crossroads and bridge between countries and civilisations; «Al-Hadbâ»\*\*, which has always known how to stand up to the course of events and which has always been the cornerstone of any fair military line, we are here for this celebration where culture and militancy have become one. During the radiant and decisive days of our beloved Iraq, the days that witnessed the nationalization of petroleum (June, 1972), thus erasing the memory of the June defeat, newly permitting the Arab nation to savour the joy of great victories, the University of Al-Mawsil gave a new generation of workers to the society, a new generation which we have the joy —it will have all the honor— of naming «the generation of nationalization and liberation».

We are actually celebrating two events at the same time, and the joy of those students with degrees has become one with that of the people: the celebration of great victories and that of great historical responsibilities. In fact, the university, as well as the professors and the students with degrees, is today confronting new kinds of historical responsibilities, whose significance is greater than ever.

For the first time in the contemporary life of Arabs, an Arab country has succeeded in shattering the yoke which the petroleum companies had closed onto the

\* The name of the city, Al-Mawsil (Mossoul) comes from the Arabic word «wassala», meaning to link, to arrive at, to communicate, on the basis of which the author forms his pun.

\*\* «Al-Hadbâ», feminine Ahdab, meaning hunch-backed, bent over, curved, from which the author forms his pun.

national economy which, deprived of its independence, witnessed the obstruction of its evolution. The wealth of petroleum could thus not be employed as a weapon to combat the colonial-Zionist alliance, which is at the origin of the disunion, under-development and oppression in our homeland and is responsible for the defeats which have been inflicted upon it.

For the first time since the defeat of June 5, a giant has appeared on the scene, he is determined and proud, defying the dangers and resisting the distress which has spread out since June, as well as opposing plans that aim at serving defeatism and despair. Authentic bridges have been set up between reality and our ambitions. A new stage has been inaugurated where the Arabs from the Ocean to the Gulf have recovered their momentum and resumed their unified struggle, as it was in the course of the fifties. With eyes turned toward Baghdad, they express satisfaction with the achievements that have taken place, and are ready, with their leaders, to open a heroic page of our history where the struggles will be able to break down all factors of weakness, deterioration and defeat.

It is in this general context of nationalism, which has thus permitted the opening of a new and ascending path for the Arab Nation, that we celebrate this new generation of graduates. But from the very fact of this historical event, where the people have retaken control of their wealth, this celebration of the year's end takes on a particular meaning, a scope which it had never before experienced. The students who are leaving the university know which responsibilities are awaiting them. They are designated as actual soldiers, who will be committed to a battle which goes beyond the limits of Iraq and of the Arab homeland, which has an authentically international dimension. The university is a revolutionary institution and no break can be tolerated between the knowledge



which it spreads and the necessities of the current historical stage. The professors have the duty of preparing militant generations who will have faith in the inevitability of the victory of the Arab Revolution. That is necessary, since nationalization in itself is a beginning of revolution and a battle for the reconstruction of the country, as well for the reconstruction of the national life on the bases of advanced militancy. Nationalization constitutes a qualitative bond for this country and we will find ourselves out of touch with our historical situation if we continue to follow the rhythm of the preceding stage, if we do not rid ourselves of worn-out ideas and if we do not adapt our activities to new realities. The institutions must also evolve in order to reach a level corresponding to that attained in the course of nationalization. Thus, we will be at the height of this historic achievement, we will not hinder its potential impact and we will not obstruct its development. This nationalization is as much of a challenge thrown at us as it is a challenge thrown in the face of colonialism, the monopolies and the Zionists. It is as much of an eternal battle as it is a victory over the external enemy.

This celebration of the year's end is actually a phase of preparation for the battle. There lies its profound meaning and it is impossible to ignore it. For the struggle, it no longer suffices to be a mere academic tradition. It basks in this great joy born of great achievements, this joy which, in the course of the combat, re-established the links between the glorious historical past of our nation and the authentic choice, victorious progress, self-confidence and reassumption of our destiny. Before the great historic responsibilities which we must accomplish, the academic tradition should be transformed into an authentic revolution in order to become the crucible of this great joy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The new awarding of university diplomas today is going to reach a society and social situation of profound change, in a regional context as well as a national one. The current historical stage, the great historical step which we have just taken on the way of the Revolution in these countries, authorizes neither immobility nor self-satisfaction.

With nationalization, this historic act, the Arab nation has assumed its ascending march after all the setbacks suffered in the sixties. The «generation of the nationalization» is part of this ascending march. It will not play an effective role, however, unless it has «revolutionary» qualities, the only ones capable of preserving this historic attainment, of building a new Iraq and of consolidating our country's role in the heart of the Arab Revolution.

Speaking of the Revolution and revolutionary conditions today comprises a meaning which revolutionary action did not possess before the defeat of June 5 and before the annihilation of the monopolies since, earlier, revolutionary action was rather superficial and banal.

In order for these students who are soon going to enter into productive life to be revolutionaries—in the new sense—they must be fully conscious of their new role: they are going to know a new ascending phase of the Nation. They must accept with modesty, while practising their self-critique in a healthy and honest way, that learning and the academic specializations which they have acquired do not, in themselves, suffice in preparing them for the new tasks which await them. This learning and this specialization should be linked to present political contexts, placed in the framework of the historical stage that the nation is crossing, with the new structures that it has acquired since the resorption of the cancerous monopolies.

In the past, too many academics only aimed at utilizing their university diplomas toward material ends. They wanted to earn comfortable livings and raise families. They dreamed of the sweetness of life, of a nice place to live and of a nice car... They lived practically outside of any social context, each one of them building his own particular world, cutting himself off from the life of the people and from the struggle, worrying neither about the crisis which shook the homeland nor about the needs of the nation. Living in the alienation of their personal wellbeing, they existed as foreigners in the middle of a society where many problems prevailed. At this moment, however, no gap, no barrier between the life of the individual, of the generation or of the society can be tolerated. The historical stage which we are crossing condemns any gap of this sort and holds such a split responsible for the evils we are facing. The existence of individuals, as well as their liberty and their means of subsistence, depends on the victory of the homeland and the resistance of the nation.

The life of individuals, the bread of the popular masses and the happiness of generations turned toward the future depend today more than ever on the continuity of the revolution. These greatly awaited radical social transformations, the deepening of the militant Arab movement and the victory of the nation after its defeat all depend on the victory of the revolution.

The graduates coming up to the platform in order to take the key which will permit them to enter into public, productive life must prepare themselves for this life as would heroic fighters entering onto the field of battle. Their personal dreams must be in agreement with the ambitions of the people and with the needs of the nation if they want to triumph over disunion, to reunify the Arab homeland and to conduct the struggle for unity against the external enemy and under-development.

The Revolution honors these students, establishing a link between the end of their studies and the greatest achievement the Arab nation has known after the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the unity of 1958. It is thus their duty to prove their ability for safeguarding this revolutionary attainment and, given its profound democratic dimension, to take into account its importance for Arab unity and the popular masses.

As for the university which ensured the formation of these students, it is an institution which must encourage new intellectual attitudes, new pedagogical methods and all that is likely to develop research and to improve life in general. It is also its duty—as is that of any other institution—to combat weaknesses and to be aware of any gaps or delay in relation to the march of the Revolution. The university must make enormous efforts to contribute to the formation of the generations born of the Revolution, and to raise them in an authentically democratic and socialist way, with constant care given to Arab unity.

The great challenges and the serious battles waged against colonialism and its monopolies, as well as those against the Zionist invaders, are the objectives in which the new Arab man and the revolutionary Arab generations are constituted. Their education and their formation can be improved to the point of giving them the means for responding to the challenges which are thrown at them. Our universities must be transformed. They must become militant institutions where militant thought and spirit are developed and where militancy acquires all its weight and significance.

Our universities, in forming the Arab revolutionary generations, are accomplishing an historical task of crucial importance for the struggle, since they contribute to molding the attitudes which the Nation will adopt toward itself and toward the world. They also contribute

by forging the instrument of the struggle which expresses the identity of the Nation, its future and the orientations of its combat. If the period of university learning is not put in the service of this historic and militant task, it will become a factor of alienation and even a project of sabotage, since it will halt development. In fact, the Nation cannot provide an accurate image of its profound identity if the «culture» becomes completely cut off from its historical roots. Besides, any true and living scientific idea is inconceivable in a static perspective where the study of the past constitutes an end in itself, without any attention given to attach it to the present or to the process of world evolution. In the same way, a vision which is attentive to neither cultures, civilizations nor to the progress of humanity cannot aid a nation in forming the best image of itself.

The role of the university in the Arab homeland is thus that of giving birth to an authentic Arab culture, whose roots reach most deeply into our national history and which, at the same time, is capable of comprising the movement of history and its continuity, and of recognising the links between the past, the present and the future. This culture must be open to all and its civilizing mission must never be forgotten. It must be in continual interaction with the evolution of humanity. Its impact on the Arab situation must be truly revolutionary. The reasons for disunion, for the imperialist presence and for Zionism must be tracked down and abolished. All forms of under-development and all aspects of exploitation must be denounced and done away with. All efforts must be made toward the setting up of a progressive, civilized and human world.

There can be no authentic learning if the very foundation of all learning —society with its problems, situated in a particular historical stage— is ignored. Scientific specialization constitutes only a small parcel of

this conscious knowledge. The economic and political framework in which it is called into practice must be given constant attention inside university institutions, since the first conditions to fulfill in order to form an authentically cultured man, an militant intellectual aware of his personal role in the battle of destiny to which the entire Nation has committed itself, is to form him in such a way that he will never be able to ignore the links between knowledge and political and economic revolution.

Like Socrates, who in his time showed the unity between knowledge and virtue, we must, in our time, make the link between knowledge and the Revolution. It is only through establishing this link that the identification between knowledge and revolution can be achieved.

In essence, knowledge is more than a simple comprehension of phenomena and the laws that rule them. At the same time, it is the aptitude for making this comprehension operative, and the capacity for mastering these phenomena by determining the changes and mutations necessary to bring an end to temporary failures and to hasten the restructuring of society on new bases, and to orient the various stages of its evolution in a way which sustains the general march of history.

Knowledge is thus a virtue and a revolution because it is the best expression of historic responsibilities.

When our universities have the primary objective of being authentically revolutionary centers, of extracting revolution from knowledge and knowledge from revolution, in other words, when the thoughts they bring forth constitute the struggle and also become the fruits of this struggle, then we will be able to say that these universities have truly known how to assume their historic responsibilities. We will be able to say that the Arab man and the Arab revolutionary generations have begun to emerge from the university, as the militant

man and revolutionary generations emerge in our period.

You, the generation of nationalization and liberation, you know that the Revolution of July 17, 1968, in making the historic decision to nationalize Iraqi petroleum, has hewn a breach in the citadel of the imperialist monopolies and has disrupted their policy. You know that you live in a world where it is indispensable that the political map drawn up by the monopolies be overthrown and that the revolutionary generations of the world, the generations of which you are a part, must create a new world for man. You must not consider this revolutionary and historic event outside of this general international context. Your march toward liberation, and the march of the revolutionary movement in general must be in harmony with that of all the revolutionary generations that struggle in all the countries of the world, for the creation of a new world where the forces of oppression will no longer have a place. These forces have tried to subjugate nations, to subject individuals to their rule and to obstruct progress. They debase the civilizing values of human evolution.

You are at the threshold of the year 2000. Only 28 years separate you from it. The twentieth century is nearing its end. If the evolution continues at this rhythm, if its orientation remains the same without serious and unforeseeable events arising to disturb it, the picture of the world that we can use to represent it on the basis of given data is the following:\*

1. The population of the world will reach the level of six billion.

2. One billion 500 million people will comprise the population of the advanced industrial countries alone (USA, URSS, Europe and Japan). The average per capita

\* Maurice Grenier, *The Last Chance of the Third World*.

annual income will vary between a minimum of 5000 dollars and 10.000 a year.

3. The entire population of the Third World, of which you are members, will be four and one-half billion. The average per capita annual income will be only 300 dollars.

On the basis of these figures, you will no doubt grasp the importance of the decision made by this country on the subject of the nationalization of its petroleum. Such acts are likely to change the sombre image of the present of the present world, and to liberate 5 billion underprivileged human being living in the heart of proletarian nations, divided and exploited, subjected to underdevelopment and to distress. Only the struggle can bring meaning to their life. It alone constitutes their reason for living and gives a justification for their presence in history.

In confronting the petroleum monopolies and the imperialist -Zionist projects, we are actually confronting all the forces which the ascending march of history. We want to build a world that is rid of all the capitalists, colonialists, exploiters, oppressors and aggressors.

It would be committing a serious injustice against the Revolution of July 17, 1968, this Revolution which took its inspiration from the principles of the Ba'th Arab Socialist Party, which acts in the interests of the Iraqi people and the entire Arab Nation, of which we want to make a permanent revolution —yes, we would be committing a serious injustice if we did not appreciate its real value. It would be a patent injustice not to work for the elevation of all institutions to the level of the needs and the very nature of the Revolution. It would be an injustice if these intitutions themselves did not make this effort. We would fail in our responsibilities if we did not become aware of our errors in this context, and if we did



not recognize our wrongdoings. It demands of us, as it demands of itself, a constant, objective and disinterested giving of self, expressing an unlimited love and faithful attachment to our duties.

We should carry a critical and bold view of ourselves and we should not cease to evaluate that which we bring to this permanent Revolution and to re-examine our attitudes and positions in its regard.

Nationalization places the country at the highest point of its economic independence, puts it in the front ranks of the countries who are struggling for unity and permits it to take the first truly decisive steps on the way toward the liberation of Palestine. Nationalization is truly one of the great phases of the ascending and continuous march which aims at achieving all the objectives of the Arab Revolution: Unity, Freedom and Socialism.

We cannot claim to belong to the revolutionary generations unless we participate, unless all our institutions participate in the constantly ascending revolutionary process, which sweeps from its path all that holds back the spirit of the Revolution, all that is opposed to the movement of the popular and their struggle, this process which seeks to go beyond itself and to go beyond the contradictions of the situation in order to make itself completely at one with the movement of history.

My dear students,

The new historical stage which the Revolution is crossing puts before you responsibilities which only authentic heroes are capable of fulfilling.

The deepening of our thought and of our revolutionary practice is such that no activity whatsoever that reminds us of the June defeat can be tolerated. You are being called, and you have no other choice, to bring to fruition the historical tasks demanded by the objective conditions of the Revolution.

You must think of the Arab Nation before thinking of only one region of your great homeland. You must think of the future before the present; of the popular masses before yourselves; of respect for values before interest; of devoting yourself to the general good rather than leading a life devoid of any notion of it. The Revolution demands you, as it demands itself, to live for the Nation before living for yourselves, to follow the steps of the great men, to contribute more than you take and to accept that sometimes your own life will seem to be a continual and unrewarded sacrifice.

These are the criteria that the revolution employs to judge itself and its sons. It is a civilizing Revolution which goes back to the most distant past, because it has a vast socio-cultural heritage at its disposal. It is turned toward the most distant future because it has an enormous historical mission.

Without this socio-cultural depth, your Revolution could never have realized, on the land of Iraq, the Declaration of March, which our hearts must never forget. It would never have been able to newly maintain peace in the North, which permitted the country to dress its wounds and to rid itself of the sequels of the past, in order to view the future with a deep sense of the Revolution and the Civilization. And these choices constitute the foundation of the positions taken by the Revolution of July 17, this same Revolution that placed Iraq on the way toward economic independence by proclaiming the nationalization.

Without this great civilization, this rich millenary history of a country, without the Arab Nation's enduring aptitude for renewal and for the rekindling of the flame of the civilization (and Iraq is the crucible from which these aptitudes have sprung forth), the signs of this cultural and artistic renaissance, which, next to revolu-

tionary maturity, constitute the pride of Iraq, would never have been able to appear.

When the generation of nationalization and liberation has assimilated this revolutionary and civilizing vision, the expression of a profound sense of historical responsibilities, when this vision has become the motive force of life and of the continual struggle of this generation, it will no longer have any difficulty, no longer any obstacle in the way of the victory of the Revolution. A great qualitative transformation can then come about, and all the projects of the colonial-Zionist alliance, all its conspiracies against the Arab future will be placed in check.

Let us then embark together on the path of an ever-evolving life, on the path of struggle and sacrifice. Together, with you, the heroes of the future, we will all be able to realize the dream of the Arab people and the will of history by instituting Unity, Freedom and Socialism.

I thank you all.

1972



## Chapter XI

# Unity and the battle of destiny\*

The stage previous to the catastrophe of June 1967 necessarily had to favour a new awareness among Arabs. One of the aspects of this new awareness is the bringing about of a return to the fundamental sources of the Arab revolutionary ideology. This ideology, which was able to clear and set the boundaries of the Arab Revolution, had also defined the nature of the historical stage which the Nation was crossing, as well as that of the challenges which were thrown up before it. It succeeded in isolating the unique scientific response that we could give in the face of the dangers threatening our destiny, realized on revolutionary bases.

This new orientation logically follows the end where blustering propaganda and deviationist practices were the rule. It corresponds to the resurgence of several truths which had been smothered by heated campaigns of falsification and by a vast conspiracy against Arab consciousness, popular struggles and the Arab revolutionary movement.

\* Preface to the work of Michel 'Aflaq, *The Battle of the Unique Destiny* (Ma'rabat-al-masîr).

The events of recent years have had a serious impact on Arab socio-political life. The wounds which it has suffered have been deep ones. This has the effect of purifying it by reducing all misleading factors, the presence of which in the course of the earlier stage seriously confused the revolutionary consciousness and the meaning of its struggles.

After the disappearance of these hostile campaigns, the Arab revolutionary ideology newly appeared to be qualified to heed and to understand the necessities of the moment, the signs of evolution and the demands implied within them. It was proven that the ideology was not responsible for deviationist practices. The perpetrators of these practices only exploited it negatively and shamelessly, borrowing its slogans and throwing them like powder into the eyes of the people in order to conceal their practices. Because they were never concretized, a veritable dichotomy arose between the slogans and their realization. Those responsible for this situation did not hesitate, in addition, to accuse the ideology, which they claimed to be the cause of their failures.

This is why, today, we must rely on the revolutionary ideological heritage, that which paved the way for unity in 1958, and which also sustained the Arabs in their fierce resistance to the enemies during the fifties. We must reimmerge ourselves in it in order to find the truth, and *The Battle of the Unique Destiny* (Ma'rabat al masîr al-wâhid), of Michel 'Aflaq, will be of the greatest interest in this endeavour. Here we have concrete proof that the men who were in positions of command during the course of the preceding stage had nothing to do with the principles of the Arab revolutionary ideology. Throughout their modes of action we see nothing which reflects these principles. In their daily practices, their marked hostility for this ideology, of

which they tolerated neither the criteria nor the system of values, was only too evident. First being ignorant of it, they then monopolized it, in order to debase its very essence through abusive applications.

In order to go beyond the preceding stage, it will suffice to denounce its errors. We must return to the ideological sources from which the practice departed and to the principles of which the applications were fraudulent. Finally, we must return to the foundations of the Arab revolutionary strategy which springs from these ideological sources.

The thoughts and writings brought together in *The Battle of the Unique Destiny* deal with the problem of the Arab destiny in the light of the situation which prevailed in the course of the fifties. Michel 'Aflaq tries to distinguish the orientations of the stage which preceded these years. Here he also attempts to define the primary conditions necessary for the Arab struggle for Unity, Freedom and Socialism to embark on a healthy path.

The militant who today returns to this heritage will certainly be surprised and curious to find out what comprised the audience of Michel 'Aflaq at this time. All those who, through their militancy, are more or less connected with the Arab Revolution, will find a rich collection of ideological sources and references in these writings, of total relevance for the present.

But why are these writings not studied and analysed? Why have we not transformed *The Battle of the Unique Destiny* into revolutionary on a similar level? Why has revolutionary action been subjected to the caprices and good intentions of the leadership? Why this maneuvering by sight which, in the course of the preceding stage, finished by sapping the vigour of the struggles, marking the beginning of an entire period of failure and reversal? How did the triumphant march of the masses, in the

course of the fifties, later become transformed into a series of failures?

The popular masses and the revolutionary ideology were confirmed as a whole in the prisons of the regimes in power. Thus the vast conspiracy against the Arab revolutionary movement could be woven. Its perpetrators (the imperialists, Zionists and reactionaries) employed all those who had been thrown out during the preceding stage and treated them like «heroes», giving them the job of realizing their projects.

The disaster of June 5 permitted the raising of the curtains which were hiding the truth. What had crystallized, in total clarity, in the spirit of the revolutionary vanguard, a quarter-century ago became increasingly fixed with distinctness in the consciousness of the popular masses. They ended by understanding that the way of the Arab Revolution is born of the Arab revolutionary ideology and in the strategy defined by it. The foundation of this strategy is the unity of the struggle, a unity capable of responding to the necessities of *The Battle of the Unique Destiny*.

The battle which first ensued took place on the level of the Arab being, on the level of the «objective development» of Arabs. Its aim was to permit a renaissance of the Arab personality and to transform our countries. It was set in motion as soon as the Arabs began to take awareness of the reality of the Nation, as soon as they began to recognize that:

- the Arab Nation is a *unified nation*, which has been divided by forces, interests and projects hostile to the evolution of peoples.

- that this Nation is a *civilized nation*, won over progressively by decadence.

- that it is a *proletarian nation*, whose riches have been pillaged, whose efforts have been exploited, whose potentialities have been smothered because of certain



*reactionary classes*, who ignored the interests of the majority, also because of the colonial-Zionist forces who, by means of aggression, occupation, threats and theft committed in broad daylight attempted to operate against any form of freedom, and to perpetuate disunion and under-development.

This new awareness brings up a number of questions:

— What is the nature of the stage which the Nation is crossing?

— Is the negative phase in the life of the Nation coming to an end?

— Which is the correct path toward an authentic renaissance?

— What are the weapons?

— What are the correct criteria for militancy?

— What is the exact nature of this militancy?

— What is the historical responsibility incumbent upon the new Arab generations?

— What is the level which should be reached by Arab revolutionary action?

It is not easy to answer these questions. To answer them, certain conditions have to be satisfied. Culture, theoretical formation and openness to international revolutionary experiments will not suffice... one must add to this the practice of militancy and the force which the latter demands when thought is linked to practice, the only means of profoundly grasping the movement of the evolution of the situation and the ensemble of the contradictions which characterize it.

The thoughts and articles of Comrade 'Aflaq in the course of the fifties, especially in 1956 and 1957, contain critical analyses of the militant march which, at this time, was in full vigour. Here the author indicates the current criteria and the level that the struggle demands.

By exhaustively analysing the events in detail, he attempts, in particular, to isolate the bases from which a new and more intense phase of the struggle can be initiated. Basing his efforts on the data of the immediate reality, the founder of the Party brings answers to the different problems posed by Arab militantism. His answer are characterized by the same revolutionary realism and the same scientific approach to phenomena that one finds in the pages of *The Battle of the Unique Destiny*. The collection of studies contained in this work form the thread of the comprehensive strategy for the Arab Revolution. Here the author defines the nature and the dimensions of the stage through which the Nation is crossing and from there determines the level to which Arab revolutionary action should extend.

*I. What is the nature of the stage the Arab Nation is crossing?*

On page 126, Michel 'Aflaq writes:

«The Arab Nation is crossing a revolutionary phase, a phase of overthrow. This is what we have never ceased to affirm since the founding of our Party. Only a conscious minority of the Nation listened attentively to this affirmation. Today, however, we see millions of Arabs becoming aware of this truth. Also, in all parts of the world, we see peoples and states who have understood what the reality of Arabs is and who have grasped the nature of the stage that we are crossing. Further on, the Party's founder adds: «This phase of overthrow resembles a state of war, with all that which is implied by such a situation —vigilance, prudence, intensification of efforts, increased production, the sacrifice of luxury items, the putting to use of all potentialities, in particular the creative and innovation spirits, and, above all, the

elaboration of an entire strategy, the definition of clear objectives and the unification of action and of work. In addition, we must learn how to take advantage of all victories, even partial ones, that we will be able to ensure ourselves of in the course of our long struggle, in order no nourish and to widen its horizons, and to increase its intensity.» (pag. 142)

«If the Arabs are authentically conscious of the nature of the stage which they are crossing, they will rid themselves of many of their fears, worries and hesitations. They will have more confidence in the rightness of their choices and their courage will be increased.» (p. 160).

Why would it be this way? The founder of the Ba'ath replies:

«The Arabs are crossing an historical phase where justice and right are following them step by step, like an inevitable destiny. This explains why all free peoples and all the free men of the earth support the just cause of the Arabs. We will not accept that the links our Nation has with justice and right depend solely on this present situation, on this crucial phase where colonialist oppression subjugates and attacks us. We have given ourselves an ambitious notion of this stage, we conceive of it as a new form of experience, as an ordeal for testing our capacities and aptitudes, not only for liberating ourselves from colonialism but also for retrospectively considering, with a critical spirit, our state and ethical and intellectual criteria before colonialism. We must also be fit to prepare our future, with extreme vigilance, in order that it be healthy and free from all the evils of the past, and in order that all favorable conditions be brought together on solidly established bases for the production of fertile soil.» (pag. 89)

We must then, logically, rid ourselves of any approach or any method which is unfit for defining the historical stage in process:

«To claim to speak of the evolution of a stage where only overthrow and revolution could possibly be effective is a reactionary and unconscious attitude. Embarking on the path of false evolutionism can only constitute an obstacle to real progress and can only oppose the revolution instead of constituting one of the latter's phases.» (pag. 72)

But what corollaries can we derive from these premises? Michel 'Aflaq replies: «Knowing that the Arab Nation is crossing a revolutionary phase, what should one do in order to make it a positive revolution, to make it grow until it touches the very roots of humanity? In other words, how can we struggle against the temptation of the easy way, how can we avoid haste and its dangers, how can we eliminate falsifications not being satisfied with superficial progress and half-solutions?» (pag. 5)

Has the negative phase in the life of the Arab Nation come to an end? «If we consider the contemporary Arab renaissance, we can perceive that its first phase was marked by negative influences and reactions. All the manifestations of the awakening, whether in the socio-political context or on the ideological level, only constituted reactions against the state of decadence and immobility which had earlier hindered the Nation. These manifestations were a quasi-imitation, a reproduction of the earlier state which, in principle, had to be fought and overcome. Besides, this is a completely natural phenomenon. It was inevitable, at the beginning of its renaissance and the overthrow of its structures, that the Nation cross a negative phase in the sense that the gestures and actions in favour of change did not fundamentally differ from the state which they were trying to overcome». (pages. 9-10).

What are the signs of the new positive phase?

«An authentic movement cannot confine itself solely to being a response to a conjunctural state in which the

Nation finds itself. Colonialism, feudalism, tribalism and regionalism are conjunctural states. They are a product of the weakening and the laxity of existence and it is when these evils spring up that the superficial aspects cover things up and reign over their substance.» (page 11).

The Party's founder continues:

«Those who closely followed the evolution of the Ba'thist movement, at least on the ideological level, can recognize that since the beginnings of this movement all efforts have been made to embark on a positive path which succeeds the negative one taken earlier.

»We have always considered that the so awaited stage was delaying, this stage in the course of which immobility and conservatism will be overcome, and in which the reaction and superficial solutions will be eliminated. The advocates of this «progressivism» are only leading the Arab citizen astray. They want to deprive him of his identity, of his soul and of the history of his Nation. Already, since this time, we have denounced this artificial and inconsistent progressivism, which has no relation to reality.» (pages. 14-15).

Michel 'Aflaq sees this positive phase characterized by the appearance of a «new conception of national action»:

«This new conception can be summarised by two essential notions —priority given to the people and the consideration of the Arab cause as an indivisible whole.» (pag. 171)

## *II. What is the true path toward an authentic renaissance?*

Any strategy elaborated to answer the demands of the present historical stage, which does not arise from a

comprehensive and exhaustive vision of the national cause, can in no way help to clear the path toward an authentic renaissance. There are fundamental and necessary conditions for any revolutionary action, if this action wants to rise to the level of the historic tasks of the present stage.

Michel 'Aflaq thus characterizes the first of these conditions:

«The Arab people, led by the revolutionary vanguard, conscious of and animated by the greatest faith, will continue its historical struggle for liberation, embarking on the path of the internal renaissance that life opens up in front of any sincere and authentic action. Thus the souls will be accustomed to it before they have the possibilities for action and they will be prepared before the taking of arms. The vital current which crosses the soul of the Nation and digs deeply to extract all its latent powers will be nourished from it. Freedom will be touched by it down to its deepest roots.» (pag. 32)

And on the subject of the second:

«What we want to see achieved for our Nation several decades from now, should appear, even in an inchoate state, and become concrete from this point on in our struggle... If these values do not take form in our spirits and in our actions, since we have become aware of them and since we have begun the struggle, we will never be able to realize them...» (pag. 41)

Continuing on the same idea, Comrade 'Aflaq adds:

«If from the beginning of their struggle, the militants do not attach themselves to the values of the overthrow, it is useless to hope that they will be able to change once they have taken power, since force and power, far from raising man to the level of these values, constitute sources of temptation and weakness for the human soul.»

After discussing this subjective condition, Comrade 'Aflaq then defines the objective condition:

«For the Ba'th Party, the national cause is one, and it can only be defended by the coming of an overthrow, in the genuine sense of the term, which does not limit itself to the political domain, but which extends to the ideology and the spirit of the nation, to social education and to the economy.

»The ideological research and convictions are not always disinterested, as they often hide particular interests and personal ambitions. Is it then not surprising to see Arab unity defended with ardour by certain —or even by the majority— of those who have economic interests in the Arab homeland (without the suspicion ceasing inasmuch to be directed toward them). Everything leads us to doubt their intentions and causes us to question their purposes. Their fervour for unity, in fact, only aims at thwarting the socialist movement, at making it suspect, and in sowing doubt in the minds of the people by claiming that socialism is a hindrance to the realization of unity, that it fragments efforts and sows disparity. They also claim that socialism would be premature and that unity, when realized, will resolve all difficulties and lift away any obstacles.» (pages. 34, 40)

Elsewhere, the author presents the conditions for an authentic rebirth, giving a comprehensive vision of the dialectic of «the subjective and the objective». He writes:

«If we gave Arabs the choice between the most immediate possible realization of their objectives (Unity, Freedom and Socialism) at the price of their alignment with the eastern camp whose revolutionary methods they would adopt, and the pursuit of their own revolution, with its specific methods inspired by their situation, their needs, and their conceptions of life and of man, even if this had to delay the realization of their objectives during a more or less long period, they would prefer the longer way, so as not to sacrifice certain fundamental values. Thus, their revolution will be able to go deeply and to

acquire a great maturity, informing the morale and education of individuals. There are limits to our revolutionary start for liberty and progress, limits which we must never overstep: we must respect the sacredness of the human being and take care that his authenticity is not compromised, since he himself is the end of any movement for liberation and progress.» (pages. 129, 130)

### *III. What are the tasks to be accomplished at the present stage?*

Their general framework is the following:

«The question which was asked of the generation of Arabs who committed themselves to accomplish their national tasks at the beginning of the Second World War, was: Will the Arab Revolution be an historic and authentic Revolution? Will the Arab Nation be able to act in a way which is at the level of the evils from which it suffers, the injustices of which it is a victim and the reversals which it has experienced? It was clear, in the eyes of this generation, that in grasping the profound meaning of these sufferings and injustices which no nation had ever before suffered, it was possible to open up the spouting and inexhaustible sources for the stimulation of faith, for the formation of a creative will and for the reviving in Arabs of this state of mind where existence is comprised in an authentic mission». (pag. 183).

But if the historical stage that the Arabs are currently crossing is a revolutionary stage, does this mean that we ought to leave the trouble of isolating and putting into action all the latent potential solely to the forces of evolution?

«Either we consider that the force of history, certainly favorable to our militant struggle, makes us exempt from



any effort (and, in this case, our existence will remain superficial), or we use this force of history in order to deepen our revolution as much as possible.» (p. 6)

But how can we effectively use this force of history?

«It is time that the Arabs considered their fundamental problem in a lucid and sincere manner. It is time that they stopped looking for excuses and running from their responsibilities, while accusing colonialism of all their problems. At present, they must consider their problems in a deeper way and examine them from the inside. They must recognize that they, in the first and last instances, are the only ones responsible for their destiny.» (pp. 26, 27)

But how can we get the Arabs to assume this responsibility in the most suitable way?

1. «Our goal is to bring an end to emotional and unreflective reactions and to defeatism and to bring about the participation of the greatest number of sons of our people in the cause and the Destiny of the Nation. The mobilization of the enormous popular forces, who until now have been neglected and eliminated from the battle, is our only hope if we want some day to have another idea of ourselves and to change our attitude with regard to colonialism: we no longer consider the presence of colonialists on our land to be a fatality, and their desires will no longer be orders to follow without discussion.

»The Arab governments believe that it is less compromising and easier to submit to the demands of colonialism, rather than to confront the formidable desire for liberation which is felt by the Arab masses. They therefore always choose the easiest way, and in spite of themselves become transformed into instruments which colonialism uses in order to hinder the liberation of the people and to delay its evolution.

»We would be able to blame the Arab people for the fact that, following this same logic, they consider that

the most effective struggle that they can undertake against the colonialist forces is to rise up against the ruling class which has submitted to these forces.» (pp. 27, 28).

2. «The only means of liberating the Arab homeland and of unifying it is to assure that the Arab Masses have power and to entrust the destinies of the Nation to them, since it is only the popular masses who have the interest in taking on the task of the independence of Arabs, the unity of the Homeland and the rebirth of the society. They alone have the will and the force.» (p. 28)

Before going over the other tasks demanded by the present stage, we should ask ourselves why Professor 'Aflaq insists at this point on the role of the *popular masses*, as if they constituted the key to all problems, the guarantee for all action, and a weapon for all battles.

On this subject, he writes:

«From the very fact of the injustice and the oppression that they experience, the oppressed Arab masses express the truth of the Nation. It is the popular masses who possess the greatest part of the potential and the aptitudes of the Nation.» (pp. 29, 30)

Our era is that of the popular masses, the proletarian masses of the three continents. Subjugated and pillaged, these masses have endured the most painful human experience.

We are witnessing the coming of the role of the popular masses, and the authentic popular masses are the people of Asia and Africa who have suffered most greatly from foreign domination and internal oppression.

«Contrary to what has taken place in the West, the revolution of the eastern peoples is, in the first place, a revolution which aims at liberating man, since it is directed against colonialism, the bearer of all sorts of injustice. In the West, only certain social classes are the victims of injustice whereas in the East, entire nations suffer from it.

»The Arab Ba'th must, therefore, be nationalist or it will not exist, since its nationalism is the guarantee of its humanism.» (p. 29)

On this subject, Professor 'Aflaq adds:

«From their bitter experience, the Arabs know how much credibility they have lost, how much they have been spiritually weakened and submitted to humiliation when the Arab masses are betrayed and when the destinies of the Nation are in the hands of a privileged and exploitative minority, in the hands of frivolous amateurs and vain adventures. The Arabs know that in such circumstances the situation worsens, platitudes and pessimism spread, spirits become closed to any historical perspective and to any idea of a mission. Who else, if not the popular Arab masses, would be able to deliver the existence of Arabs from all which has prevented it from fully blossoming? Who else would be able to resituate the Arabs on the current of history, newly putting them into contact with the warmth of creative life? Who would be able to sharpen their sense of destiny by the sufferings of these millions of oppressed peoples, to enrich it by freeing the hopes which were always suppressed and imposing the historic potential accumulated in the course of centuries?» (pp. 30, 31)

«...as long as a great part of the Arab people remains outside of the battle and as long as numerous elements in the spirit of each Arab citizen participating in the struggle remain in the state of latency, inoperative and not mobilized for the battle, as long as the latter has not touched the most sensitive chords and the deepest extents of the militant soul...»

This state of mind demands a reaction:

«...It is necessary to plunge to the roots of the popular masses and to extend to the most secret reaches of the Arab soul. In Arab society, there is such an arbitrary rule, such practices of humiliation, and such a

contempt for the most fundamental rights of citizens, that the already scandalous economic disparities have become amplified and that we would be contradicting ourselves if we were satisfied with only denouncing the colonial oppression, while remaining silent in the face of these intolerable conditions and in delaying the bringing of their solution.» (p. 102)

3. The current stage demands that we define the objective criteria for militant action and that we go beyond certain obsolete conceptions of power and leadership:

«It is not sufficient that the intuition of the revolutionary leaders is strong and sincere and that their way of approaching current problems is directed toward the future, encouraging evolution. The leaders can always disappear, or be replaced by others. It is therefore necessary to define the fundamental criteria and the objective theoretical foundations, for the scope of the people. These rules should be the product of successive militant experiences which the people have led. They must be able to be used as criteria, permitting us to evaluate our militants and to judge the rightness of our acts. They also must constitute a means for our people to control themselves and their leaders.» (p. 172)

4. It is also necessary to constantly return to a method of critical analysis, capable of eliminating the errors and shortcomings of each stage, even if the realizations are remarkable and the victories are numerous.

«It is logical that at this historical stage where the Arab nation is the victim of all sorts of attacks and where it is courageously resisting, that we concentrate our attention on the weak points and gaps which hinder the development of our national life, instead of uniquely concentrating on the force that we have acquired and on the progress that we have achieved.» (p. 106)

Even though during the years 1956-58, we scored

numerous victories, and even though this period was a triumphal one for the Arab struggle, Michel 'Aflaq has never ceased in his writings to insist on the importance of the exercise of critique, a constructive critique which aims at raising the level of the struggle:

«The victories of the Arab people in certain regions of its homeland (such as the Egyptian and Algerian Revolutions and the consolidation of the Syrian popular movement), are a great source of optimism and they reveal the great latent abilities of our people. But these victories must not prevent us from going forward and from raising the level of the struggle, which has not yet been placed either in a vast comprehensive plan or in a long-term strategy. If not, we will be threatened with stagnation and we will expose ourselves to set-backs and deviationist currents.» (p. 171)

It is therefore our task to elaborate a strategy where «national» concerns take precedence over «regional» ones, and where the future constitutes the axis of current militant action.

«We must place the cause of Arab militant action above all the regional problems and necessities, in a way that will serve the national cause. This implies the elaboration of a comprehensive strategy, on a long-term basis and with wide horizons, which deals with problems of the present in the light of the future toward which we aspire. We must also define the various stages, deciding which of the problems demand an immediate solution and which ones can wait.

»We must also liberate the popular potential from all its links, by again challenging the old principles and current social structures, which are incapable of providing more than they have provided up until today.» (pp. 144-145)

#### IV. *What must be our response to the present challenge which engages our destiny?*

Our best response is unity. This is what the founder of the Ba'th never ceases to repeat:

«There is no doubt that the objectives of the Ba'th Party, Unity, Freedom and Socialism, are essential objectives and of equal importance. It is permitted neither to separate them nor to give one of them priority over another. But what is also certain is that unity, which most profoundly expresses the identity of the Arab Nation, has a certain priority and a particular moral importance. The militants must not forget this. Otherwise, they might let themselves be led astray by ideological currents and political tendencies which are completely opposed to the idea of the Ba'th.

»The freedom which an Egyptian or Lebanese political party demands, the socialism for which a Syrian or Iraqi party militates, qualitatively differ from the freedom and socialism that the Arab Nation (as a united Nation, heir to a great civilization, rich with considerable possibilities and aptitudes that permit it to have a new and authentic rebirth) can realize, and which it most urgently needs. The differences between socialism and freedom conceived in the state of disunion and by *the spirit of disunion*, and the socialism and the freedom conceived by the unitary ideology, are differences of quality, not of quantity.» (pp. 18, 19, 20)

Michel 'Aflaq continues:

«When Arab unity becomes the axis of our Revolution, the heart which causes it to beat, and the hope which inspires and orients it, all the difficulties and perils which, ten or twenty years ago, led our life in the direction of mediocrity, in a practical as well as a theoretical context, and reduced us to approaching our situation and dealing with our problems in a superficial

and often inadequate way, all these dangers will fade away. Whether it is in the battle for liberation and independence, or in the struggle for progress and the social revolution, the idea of unity, in all Arab countries, aids in the search for radical and decisive solutions. As a slogan, unity leads each country to personally assume the burden of the entire Nation. In addition, it puts all the potentialities of which this Nation disposes at the disposal of each country... For us, Arabs, unity leads to the Revolution and the Revolution leads to unity.» (p. 185)

But how can we attain unity?

«Unity implies a radical transformation of the present situation. Claiming to militate for unity without adopting a revolutionary conception, whereas this is necessary, (a daily combat asserts itself, an ideological and scientific combat for the transformation of the present situation) is a trap, an attempt at misdirection and an intoxication of opinion.» (p. 198).

According to 'Aflaq, only one path can lead to unity:

«In the circumstances which the Arab Nation is presently crossing, on the internal level, on one hand, and taking its position on the international level into consideration, on the other hand, there can only be one path towards unity: that of the struggle for liberation and progress, the political and social struggle, in other words, that of the masses of the Arab people. Any attitude that strays from this path signifies not only a corruption of unity but also the prevention of its realization.» (p. 168)

In this dialectical and scientific perspective, unity takes the form of a revolutionary process which permits the overcoming of disunion as a state of fact and as a philosophy. The dialectical opposition of contradictions can transform reality and instigate changes which will finish by establishing a more dynamic situation and advancing the realization of unity:

«Our idea has always been that Arab unity is a revolutionary objective, and even that it is the most revolutionary of our objectives. Unity is a process of liberation, of edification, of creation. It is only possible when the contradictions burst and affirm themselves in the spirits of the people: the contradictions between freedom and colonialism, between progress and the reaction. Also, it is only possible on the condition that the peoples' struggle against colonialism and the reaction is unified, not only on the scale of the Arab homeland, but also on the international scale.» (pp. 178, 179)

But what are the characteristics of this unity? By what means can we achieve it? What is, in any way, its substance? According to what strategy can it be realized?

Professor 'Aflaq replies to all these questions:

1. «We must make unity the best expression of the ensemble of the struggles that the Arabs are leading to liberate themselves from the reaction, injustice and corruption. Unity is the expression of the various battles conducted against colonialism and internal oppression, against class exploitation and against under-development and intellectual lethargy.» (p. 62)

2. Arab unity is at the same time an idea and an objective. It is not the outcome or the result of the struggles that the Arab people are leading to liberate themselves and to build socialism, it is a new idea which must accompany these struggles and orient them. The spirit of disunion is the expression of the flight in the face of responsibilities and an oath of impotence. It is a flight forward, toward an illusory widening of the horizons of the struggle —toward the internationalism of the communists or toward religious universalism, or also, on the contrary, toward artificially restrained ideals (Syrian, Lebanese or Egyptian nationalism). The supporters of internationalism or universalism seem to believe that by attaching the Arab Nation to a world



larger than its own, it will have dispensed with the need for any internal effort. For those who, on the contrary, preach the narrowing of the field of action, it is as if the efforts employed to revitalize a fraction of the Arab people were sufficient for creating a general rebirth.

The unitary spirit consists of assuming all that is negative in the socio-cultural heritage of the Nation, without giving in to disgust or pessimism, and opening itself up to all that is positive, with neither illusions nor vanity. The followers of disunion dream of crashing, tumultuous revolutions but, in fact, are content with futile and ridiculous renovations.» (p. 22)

3. «Unity is, therefore, not an automatic process which can be accomplished by itself or the outcome of a certain movement of evolution which takes place when certain conditions are fulfilled. On the contrary, the circumstances cannot be favorable to unity and the evolution can take place in an opposite way. It can finish by establishing disunion in an apparently stable manner. Unity is an effective and creative struggle which operates on a counter-current. It is a race against the clock. This necessitates an ideology which crystallizes around the idea of overthrow, and can only take place as the consequence of a militant struggle.» (p. 23).

4. In our eyes, Arab unity remains a revolutionary objective inseparable from the only authentically revolutionary Arab force: the people.

«Unity, because of its revolutionary essence, cannot be imposed from above by superior authorities. It can only spring from the depths of the people, since it is directly linked to their interests. It is part of a struggle that they lead in behalf of liberation and social justice. And even if it can only be realized at the price of numerous efforts, even if it demands much time and implies several stages of struggle, unity, as a revolutionary objective, must, in order to be realized constitute for us, at this moment, the

point of departure and the compass which orients our combat. All our movements should be undertaken as a function of unity, any measures we take must extend toward it. We must always remain in a close relationship with it. This is why we must sacrifice purely regionalist interests, which take their meaning solely from the present situation, and attempt to surmount the obstacles placed on our path by the supporters of disunion.» (p. 73).

5. «If there is a principle which partisan quarrels and retrograde attitudes must never undermine, it is that of unity, since, otherwise, what would be the function of the reflection which the parties strive to lead, and the activity they employ? What would be the meaning of their very existence if our homeland remains fragmented, if none of its regions, however powerful and geographically spread out, has the force, with its own powers, to make a stand for the commitment of a movement of an authentic and profound rebirth, in proportion to the ideals defended by the parties?

»The people do not reproach certain unitary projects for being projects of reactionary type. They reproach them for being purely fictive, since unity and colonialism are incompatible.» (pp. 84, 86)

6. «The unity of the Arab struggles is, at this stage, the best and most rational expression of the unity of the Arab Nation.» (p. 202)

7. «We do not claim that Arab unity will be accomplished in one deed. The reason and nature of things move us to believe that it will take place in a series of stages. This is why we must support with all our strength the partial unity between two or three Arab countries, in order to permit this to be fully realized and to thrive. With the benefit of our support, this unity would be able to facilitate other efforts aiming at a wider and more solid unity.» (p. 46)

Also devoting several passages to Egypt and Algeria, Michel 'Aflaq insists on the role that these two countries play in the struggle for unity.

He also takes this opportunity to respond to all those who display doubts on this subject. On the subject of Algeria, he writes:

«Is Arabism, in essence, anything else but the struggle for freedom? Algeria in revolution incontestably represents what is best in the Arab Nation: its glorious future, the future to which we all aspire. This revolution in all the regions of the homeland is a challenge: it permits each Arab to verify his degree of attachment to unity and his faith in the Nation.» (p. 147)

On the subject of Egypt, on pages 74, 79 and 80 we can read:

«Egypt's recent orientation toward Arabism is not so much the result of an external influence as the manifestation of an internal tendency. It is the free expression of the deepest popular feelings, and it has appeared since colonialism, and, then, tyranny and reaction, these obstacles which were earlier insurmountable, were lifted away by the will of the people. With these two hindrances shattered, the people recovered their spontaneity. They were also able to recover their identity and authenticity.»

«The Party has always acted with the inspiration of the revolutionary Arab ideology which is its own, and with the conviction that unity is a profoundly revolutionary objective. It knows that this unity cannot happen spontaneously, unless a daily combat is waged for its realization.»

«It is logical that the Ba'th constantly support this tendency toward Arabism, which recently appeared in Egypt in the course of the new stage initiated after the Revolution. This support signifies that the Party firmly believes that Egypt is a country of fundamental impor-

tance, whose role can be a determining one in any attempt aiming at the realization of unity.» (pp. 194, 197)

Professor 'Aflaq accords great importance to the unitary struggle and insists on its decisive role:

«Life can be neither balanced nor stabilized on the basis of contradictions. It must necessarily resolve them.

»Our struggle is anchored in already-realized possibilities and in those, still latent, which are deeply buried in the Arab Nation.

»The combat takes place between a minority who, here as in other Arab countries, has latched onto the present situation and claims that the present situation, while unsatisfactory, is the best to which the Arabs have the right to aspire. The positions of this minority, whether it is in agreement or not, converge with colonialist views and with those of all the enemies of Arabism. They favour the corruption, injustice and under-development which weigh down upon our country. The majority, which is opposed to this minority, thinks that the maintenance of this present situation prevents, in the first place, the Arab Nation from expressing its authentic identity. All potentialities have been smothered. The country's vision of itself, and of existence in general, has become seriously deformed.»

Next, the author evokes the most pre-occupying danger for the unitary combat:

«A serious danger threatens unity: it comes from those who pretend to defend it, who boast and make loud proclamations in its behalf. They seem to adhere to the unitary ideal in order to best divest it of meaning, to strip it of all consistency and, finally, to strangle it. They give a fallacious presentation of the idea of unity, and so make it their prisoner. They use it as means of pressure, as an object of bargaining, for personal and base ends, in order to obtain important posts and to

affirm their leadership. The only way of ousting the threat that these conspiracies and falsifications hold over unity, is to seize them, to prevent them from carrying out, at its expense, these obscurantist discussions, these negotiations and these haggings among politicians, parliamentarians, and even among parties, and to return it to the masses of the Arab people.» (p. 69)

«If this foresight and lucidity are transmitted to the people, if a public opinion, organized and militant is constituted, then a strong, positive and effective unity capable of confronting internal and external conspiracies could come about. It will be able to create and to build, since Arab unity is creativity, edification and revolution, and its realization (or even the beginning of its realization) is the highest ambition that we have.» (p. 70)

#### V. *What level must the militant struggle maintain at the current stage?*

The power of the enemy is without any doubt the determining factor for the intensity of the battle:

«In the very heart of the Arab homeland, there is a usurping and expansionist state. It is a sort of military camp bristling with arms whose function is to prepare for war and to invent new treacheries. To ward off the dangers that this state incarnates and to defeat the evil that it perpetuates can not be accomplished spontaneously. We must develop a strategy. Our preparations must be in the image —if not even more determined— than those of our enemies. This is why it is not sufficient only to unify our struggles, we must also acquire the means necessary for struggling. The sacrifice of secondary objectives is indispensable, since we must concentrate the greatest part of our efforts on the vital problems of the Nation. These problems engage our future and our very existence...» (p. 143, 144)

We must still take the specific conditions in which our combat must take place into consideration:

«For us, it is essential to win the battle against colonialism, without renouncing any of our national or humanist values. More importantly, this victory must be won thanks to our attachment to these values and to their safeguard. We will not be satisfied merely with this external and conjunctural objective. Our meeting with freedom and right must constitute a destiny for us, formed by our own will, and by the will of each of the citizens of the Arab homeland.» (p. 30)

«In the combat which opposes us to colonialism, we have only won on one front: that of the Suez Canal, which the enemy had irresponsibly opened without previous reflexion. But he continues his hostile activities on all the other fronts, intensifying his preparations and employing greater ruse and greater force. It follows that the Arab people and their revolutionary vanguard must absolutely elaborate, on their part, a new plan, sufficiently effective for intensifying the combat, for perfecting the methods of the struggle and for mobilizing new popular forces. In this way, colonialism will again be obliged to cease its attacks and to take the defensive.» (p. 100)

The level that the struggles must attain most clearly appears in the following remarks:

«When our policy attains a real level of authenticity, its convictions and criteria will change. The calculations and obsessions with winning and loss will no longer prevail. The negative aspects of the current state of fact will begin to disappear, and our efforts will be able to be directed toward the building of the future. The problem today is not so much of winning or losing a battle against an enemy whose power is undeniable (even though, moreover, we are convinced that the Arab Nation, with all its potential, is capable of ensuring its victory) so

much as of knowing how to remain faithful to our ideals and to the unity of our destiny.

»The alternative, for the entire Arab people, is therefore not posed in terms of victory or defeat with regard to colonialism and Israel. The alternative is between wanting to realize unity or not; safeguarding its *raison d'être*, or not; instituting an authentic solidarity which permits Arabism to take form in the struggle.» (pp. 108-109)

The founder of the Ba'th clarifies his thought by writing that a revolutionary policy, which ensures a permanent revolution, is the practical expression of the level of the struggle that the present stage demands:

«A revolutionary policy is the only remedy for all the evils of our society, the only path to follow for the blossoming of the healthy and creative forces of the Arab people, the only way of ensuring victory over the forces of evil that assail us from everywhere. If we adopt a revolutionary policy, which is never frightened of making bold choices, the popular consciousness, touched by it, will develop a more profound notion of its responsibilities. The people will be moved by the ideal of unity and by the care for effectiveness. The unresolved and hesitant elements and the conspirators will be placed up against the wall and denounced. They will have to choose between submitting to the popular will and showing themselves for what they are, partisans of erroneous causes. The popular masses, freed from the interference of these elements, will be able to win the battle, having learned how to appreciate their own forces and denounce their enemies.» (p. 115)

The author then explains how the level of struggle demanded by the Arabs rests on the intensification and widening of revolutionary action.

«...This battle is ours, because it can be fruitful for us and for all of humanity... the longer it continues, the

greater it will be amplified, the more the positive forces and bravery of our country awaken, the greater will be the number of militants who believe in freedom and a dignified life. As for the corrupt individuals and the manipulators, they will gradually disappear. Traitors and conspirators will be denounced and tracked down, until their total suppression.

»The battle, as it extends into space and time, offers our people the possibility to employ all their capacities and to affirm their self-confidence. In this way, they will be able to become conscious of their destiny and to evaluate their own forces and those of the people who support them. At the same time, they will be able to discover the weakness of colonialism and its positions and dislodge its representatives who will be deprived of the support of their own peoples.» (p. 123)

## *VI. The general rules of the Arab militant struggle*

An ensemble of general rules is defined in the writings and remarks of Professor Michel 'Aflaq. These rules lead toward the determining of Arab revolutionary action at this historical stage. They constitute criteria thanks to which the rightness of this action can be appreciated, and they guarantee its balance. Action must never contradict the theoretical principles of the unitary socialist ideology, which is particular to the Arab revolutionary movement.

Here we will cite some of the general rules:

1. «...So, we have succeeded in isolating this truth, according to which the Arab people will only be able to ensure the unity of the struggle if they undertake the struggle for unity.» (p. 24)

2. It is thus urgent to denounce the sophistries and errors contained in the very manner of posing the



problems; without a radical perspective on the current Arab situation, there will not be a new type of radical struggle capable of decapitating the Zionist threat.» (p. 48)

3. «...You have no doubt noticed that the path that we have taken is gradually becoming more healthy and equitable now that the masses have entered the field of battle, now that they have taken on the responsibilities of the militant struggle, now that they have agreed to make sacrifices and intensely live the experience of the struggle. If the question is raised, it is because we know that unity, at its beginnings, is threatened by all sorts of deviationist and abortive attempts.» (pp. 65, 68)

4. «It is our task, to the extent that we consolidate our independence with regard to foreign countries, to attack our internal problems with a growing boldness, in order to bring answers to them.» (p. 135)

5. «It is neither surprising nor fortuitous that our links with humanity are consolidating and becoming clarified, as the signs of unity are multiplying and as our enthusiasm for its realization is growing. In fact, the more we draw closer to ourselves, the closer we are to the rest of humanity. The more we affirm our own identity, the more we can open ourselves up to others.

»Our cruel present experience gives us the aptitude for taking advantage of our rich national history and of the history of humanity in general. It can teach us how to avoid errors and to correct the deviations which our own Nation has experienced, as well as those of all other nations in the course of their past. The establishment of vital links and principles between our nationalism and our membership in humanity will be possible, without any break, gap or imbalance being able to arise.

»To those who consider that internationalism has nothing to do with nationalism, or that one is just a stage that permits the other to be achieved, we answer:

internationalism is inherent in nationalism itself. It comes neither before or after. There is neither "nationalism" nor "internationalism", but only "internationalist nationalism": this is the correct concept. Nationalism that turns its back on internationalism is a corrupt and disfigured nationalism.» (p. 131, 132)

6. «If the militants do not succeed in putting pressure on the government in such a way that the slogans of liberation and overthrow are nourished, if they do not succeed in changing the situation and in encouraging the forces capable of responding to the necessities of the struggle for the liberation and the unification, of the Arab homeland, if they do not succeed in defeating the obstacles raised by colonialism, its allies and its agents, it would be preferable that they break off any contact with the power: they would more effectively be able to aid the people in becoming aware of all the problems, in preserving the correctness of their orientation as well as the vitality of their struggles.» (p. 146)

1972

## Chapter XII

# The conspiracy against the Arab revolutionary ideology\*

After having submitted to centuries of alienation, our Nation has employed enormous efforts in order to recover its identity, its authentic essence. Attempts at analysing the specific situation of the historical stage that it was crossing have been conducted. In his work *The Point of Departure*, Michel 'Aflaq defines the means and conditions for leading our homeland to an authentic rebirth.

The generation of Arabs who assumed their national responsibilities at the beginning of the Second World War questioned the future of the Revolution. Will it be an historic revolution, a true revolution? Will the nation know how to react with equal intensity to the problems, the injustices and the deceptions that it still experiences?

It was obvious, in the eyes of this generation, that if these problems and injustices—which no other nation in the world had experienced in this way—were lucidly judged and appreciated, they would be likely to awaken inexhaustible forces, an unshakeable faith, and a creati-

\* Preface to the work of Professor Michel 'Aflaq, *Noqtat-al-bidâya*, The Point of Departure)

ve will that could bring about a general psychological state where life is identified with a mission»<sup>1</sup>.

In response to this question of historical dimensions, an entirely new scientific and revolutionary theory was elaborated. It immediately went beyond all existing theories, of national or international audiences. On the same basis, this theory became the foundation of the contemporary Arab rebirth.

It can be summarized by two fundamental principles according to which:

—«The people are the only effective revolutionary forces. Everything rests on them, and we must aid them in accomplishing their revolutionary tasks.»

— «The Arab cause is an absolutely indivisible whole»<sup>2</sup>.

This new revolutionary theory very rapidly won the membership of the cultivated vanguard and the popular masses in general throughout the entire extent of the great Arab homeland.

Traslating the demands of the contemporary Arab combat in a deep and precise way, it has become the ideological source that nourishes this combat, the ideal which maintains it on the highest levels. It is thanks to its impact that all the latent forces have been mobilized and that the Arab revolutionary experience has taken flight. It constitutes an authentic guide for revolutionary action and permits the prediction of deviations.

This ideological awakening is accompanied by a militant popular movement, directed against disunion, colonialism and Zionism, as well as against under-development and class exploitation. In the course of the fifties, this movement embraced three national causes: the

1. Michel 'Aflaq, *The Algerian Revolution: Arabism surprises itself*, in *The Battle of the Unique Destiny*, p. 183.

2. For a Consciousness turned toward Overthrow, op. cit.

Algerian and Egyptian causes and Syrian-Egyptian unity, three causes which were of crucial importance for the Nation.

According to the expression of Michel 'Aflaq, the Algerian Revolution was an experience where «arabism surprised itself, and surprised the entire world»<sup>3</sup>. According to the author, the usurpation of Palestine constitutes «one of the greatest injustices of humanity, and one of the greatest dramas of history»<sup>4</sup>. Finally, he writes, on the subject of Arab unity, which he carries, «in the tumultuous current which it nourishes, a struggle for national liberation. It intensifies the social revolution and favours world peace»<sup>5</sup>. The unitary movement also symbolizes the future appearance of the personality of the Arab Nation as a unified nation».

The colonialist states which sought, throughout several decades, to delay the Arab rebirth, were surprised by the revelation of the potential of the Arab people and by the upheaval of its revolutionary will, as well as by the obstacles, for which it was principally responsible, that continued to weigh down upon the people. They feigned retreat, but the sole objective of this retreat was to permit them to prepare their plots, in order to smother the new Arab revolutionary movement.

The new Arab revolutionary theory seized on the importance of the scope of the struggle that the Nation was leading for liberation and socialism. It was also conscious of hostile plans, conspiracies, and traps placed by Arab fighters. Even when the unitary and liberating

3. The Algerian Revolution... in *The Battle of the Unique Destiny*, op. cit., p. 183.

4. Algeria and Palestine are the two wings of the Arab Revolution, and a guarantee of its victory, in *The Battle*, op. cit., p. 161.

5. The Syrian-Egyptian Unity reinforces the revolutionary orientation and guarantees its continuity, in *The Battle*, op. cit., p. 178.

flux was at its highest point, moving the masses toward the realization of the unity of 1958, the new revolutionary theoreticians knew that the movement had been weakened by gaps and shortcomings. They knew that it was indispensable to intensify the struggle, in order to respond to hostile plans contrived by colonialism, Zionism and the reaction, their ally. All three tried, and still try, to thwart the Arab struggle and to turn the Nation away from the historical path on which it has already embarked, winning numerous victories. Also, the revolutionary theoreticians wanted to define the means which would allow the Nation to raise the level of its struggle:

«The Arab people, with its conscious vanguard and animated by an unshakeable faith, will continue its historic struggle for liberation. It will embark on the path which opens up to all sincere and authentic action, the path of the rebirth fueled from the inside.

»Thus, the souls are ready, even before they dispose of means of action, and the will will be prepared before the arms. This vital current which crosses the soul of the Nation, uncovering all its latent forces, and digging to the deepest roots in order to isolate its freedom, will be able to flow freely... The Arabs will then understand that colonial tyranny, Zionist oppression, as well as any foreign aggression or internal injustice, were nothing but opportunities given by history to the Arab people in order to permit them to realize their ideals and spiritual values.<sup>6</sup>»

These sentences, spoken in 1955, on the anniversary of the evacuation of the forces of foreign occupation from Syrian territory, were accompanied by critical remarks with regard to Arab reality, which was far behind the hopes and objectives of the Nation.

6. The opposition between superficial existence and authentic life, April 17, 1955, in *The Battle*, op. cit., p. 32.

Professor 'Aflaq continues:

«The opposition is therefore between that which the Arab Nation has realized until now and its latent possibilities. It is on the realization of its possibilities and on the mobilization of its latent forces that our destiny, our place and our role in the heart of the international community depend.<sup>7</sup>»

In other words, this means that the struggle opposes, on one hand, the governments manipulated by colonialism (whose objective is to hinder the movement of the liberation of the people and to delay its rebirth) and on the other hand, the Arab masses, who alone are capable of «restoring its true spirit to the Arab calling, while preventing it from being cut off from the warmth of life. They alone can purify this calling through the pain of millions of oppressed individuals, and enrich it with hopes until now suppressed and with the force that has accumulated over the centuries»<sup>8</sup>.

We must absolutely bring about the defeat of the conspiracy against the manifestations of the national awakening, that constitutes the formation of a new revolutionary ideology, and the movement of the popular masses unified throughout the entire country. We can only achieve this by doubling our efforts and by intensifying the struggle, which will reach a level never before attained. The response to this conspiracy must logically lead us to the elaboration of a new strategy which will command the situation of the combat and raise up new forces among the people. The colonialists will then again be obliged to pass from the offensive to the defensive»<sup>9</sup>.

It is in these terms that the new Arab revolutionary

7. Op. cit., p. 26.

8. Op. cit., pp. 28-31.

9. A new degree of the struggle, October 12, 1956, in *The Battle*, op. cit., p. 100.

doctrine defined the conditions for the continuity of the victory against colonialism and its criminal plans. It denounced the gaps and short comings at the very moment when the movement of liberation was intoxicated with the joy of its victory over the colonial pacts and the foreign aggression, as well as the success of the nationalization of the Suez Canal. The new theoreticians determined the level at which the struggles should be maintained in order that the national movement not fall into stagnation. The founder of the Ba'ath writes:

«If it is obvious that the realization of national aspirations demands a relatively long time, and that it must be spread over several stages, it becomes inconceivable not to survey the ground as a prerequisite for a comprehensive strategy. We must not cross the various stages without having defined a general path, without being convinced that this path is one and that its outcome is closely dependent upon its premises...» He adds: «This national movement, oriented toward the anti-colonialist struggle and toward the acquisition of independence, still contains certain gaps. It is necessary to amplify it, in order to make it more fruitful, by simultaneously conducting a social and ideological revolution. A good number of the Arab people still remain outside of the battle... we must plunge into the midst of the Arab masses and boldly penetrate their soul»<sup>10</sup>.

These remarks, made in 1956, as those given in the beginning of the unitary experience of 1958, while an overflowing enthusiasm accompanied this historic event, defined the bases and the criteria for a deepening of the Arab Revolution. Michel 'Aflaq insists on the most revolutionary objective of the Nation, namely, unity, since it is the fundamental condition for the combat against colonialism, Zionism and reactionary projects,

10. Op. cit., p. 100.



and also because it places it on the level demanded by the present historical stage.

«When unity becomes the axis of our Revolution, the heart that makes it beat and the hope that inspires and orients it, all the difficulties and dangers which, ten or twenty years earlier, led our life in the direction of mediocrity, on the theoretical as well as the practical level, and reduced us to approaching our situation and dealing with our problems in a superficial and often inadequate way, all these dangers will fade away. Whether it is in the battle for liberation and independence, or in the struggle for progress and the social revolution, the idea of unity, in all the Arab countries, aids in the search for radical and decisive solutions. As a slogan, unity leads each country to personally assume the burden of the entire Nation. In addition, it puts all the potentialities that this Nation possesses at the disposal of each country. The revolutionary nature of unity is undeniable, if one wants to verify that it makes the Arab combat even more painful and more necessary, as is the case in Algeria and Palestine. For us, Arabs, unity leads to the Revolution and the Revolution leads to unity.<sup>11</sup>

Also, without indulgence, the author criticizes reformism and its inability to change reality, as well as its partisans, who carelessly give in to a situation born of disunion and regionalism.

«This evolution results from the influence exerted by various circumstances and by contacts maintained with foreign countries. Colonialism has always integrated reformist currents into its projects, and has always taken them into account in its planning. It has always followed their progress with vigilance. Sometimes, it has even provoked the manifestation of reformism, while simultaneously and prudently foreseeing all that which could

11. The Algerian Revolution... op. cit., p. 185.

possibly compromise development, in order to render this evolution harmless.

»The question then asked was: will this evolution surrounded by suspicions result in an authentic revolution, which would liberate forces whose fullness the Arabs themselves have not shown, forces that colonialism will be able to neither strangle, control nor annihilate, and which the international community will no longer be able to ignore? Will these forces be able to oblige international public opinion to emerge from its neutralism and to adopt a frankly favourable —or hostile— attitude?

»Today it is clear that the authentic revolution has broken out (and only a few years later...), that the peoples and states of the entire world are affirming and discovering their particular allegiances and identities, on the basis of the positions they take with regard to the Arab nationalist Revolution. They conceive and plan for their future as a function of the latter»<sup>12</sup>.

The threat that this scientific and revolutionary theory represents, and the Party that applies its principles, have not passed unnoticed under the eyes of the masterminds of colonialism. The danger has been clarified, hostility has been declared, and the liquidation of the ABSP has become, for all the enemies of the Arab Revolution, an objective, never denied, of a ceaselessly renewed strategy.

The Arab revolutionary ideology has been fought with various weapons and means. It has been ignored, abandoned, falsified and misinterpreted, until it has become unrecognizable. The goal of the conspiracy was to smother and annihilate the idea of the revolution, the idea of unity, the will to attain one of the most revolutionary states possible, from which all the latent

12. Op. cit., p. 184.

national forces could be liberated. When the first unitary experience was attempted in 1958, the Arab masses hoped that unity, once established, would open the way to an authentic revolution, a revolution led by the people, a unitary revolution whose ultimate goal was the liberation of Palestine. They hoped that this revolution would be able to draw up plans for the struggle against the colonialist, Zionist, and reactionary conspiracies, that it would be able to be organized in order to arouse all the latent revolutionary forces of the homeland, extending the struggle out into the widest popular strata, touching the most remote corners of the homeland.

But the fact that this experience was not appreciated according to its real value and that its role was not accurately evaluated, had the consequence of emptying it of meaning, turning it away from its historical mission and altering its very essence. The masses, contained and closely controlled by the bureaucratic apparatus and the organs of repression, were subjugated to the domination of the regime. As for unity, all efforts were made to hinder its attainment and development. The prisoner of those in power, it became what they wanted it to become. Palestine no longer figured among its objectives, since it was supposedly necessary to build and develop the provinces of the unitary state.

The situation did not cease to deteriorate. The catastrophe of June 5, 1967 and the plot of September 1970 were inevitable. Similarly, the colonialists plotted against the Arab revolutionary ideology which, without any respite, struggled against the attempts at falsification of which it was a victim. The partisans of this ideology rejected —as always— any form or method of confrontation with the enemy which was based on a regionalist position. They also rose up against those who signalled, and still signal, their surrender in the face of disunion, under-development and the imperialist pre-

sence, which they considered to be mere «faits accomplis». They fought against those who, in a general manner, showed themselves to be inept at expressing the aspirations and ambitions of the surging Arab masses.

But the most challenging form that this struggle against the Arab revolutionary ideology took was the plot perpetrated in Syria in 1963. In order to undermine the revolutionary movement which appealed to this ideology, the conspirators utilized the present Syrian government.

They tried to corrupt and to deform the internal structures of the Party. To this end, they made wide use of terror and practiced corruption and nepotism, offering offices and posts of responsibility. They excluded true militants in order to substitute opportunistic and injurious elements. After this partial sabotage, they proceeded with the decapitation: the true representatives of the Party were liquidated and systematically replaced by elements in the service of the authorities. The Ba'th, the target of these continual conspiracies led by the colonialists and reactionaries, and of the campaigns of defamation, misdirection and falsification, was in a baffled and hesitant position. Its militants were deeply torn. On one hand, they felt compelled to tell the truth to the masses, if they wanted to be faithful to their principles and to their ideals. If they had to publicly recognize that the Party was in a crisis, that dangers surrounded it, that a serious risk of deviation and disloyalty to the line which it had determined had taken place, the serious militants felt trapped and disconcerted by the attitude of certain others who used the Ba'th as a springboard for taking power. But on the other hand, the conspiracies and defamatory propaganda campaigns which descended like waves upon the Party, surrounded by a growing hostility, often cornered militants into renouncing their demands for sincerity and honesty toward others and toward themselves. They concealed

many of the troubles which the Party was suffering, many of the embittered situations that it was experiencing, and many of the problems which were disrupting it. The Ba'thists wanted to avoid exposing themselves to their enemies who would not have hesitated to turn their sincerity against them. In this way a barrier began to take place between the Party and the popular masses. It did not cease to gradually increase in size, while at the same time, errors, deviations, confused situations and problems of all sorts were accumulating.

It finally became quite clear that it was the enemies of the Ba'th who most greatly profited from this tactic, which consisted of suppressing the faults and crises of the Party. The most formidable conspiracy led by the colonialists and the other enemies of the Arab Nation was to have the Ba'th subsumed into the regime. Cornered by its detractors, the Ba'th was forced to put its internal problems aside in order to devote itself to the struggle against the external enemy and to respond to its accusations. That is why the Arab Revolution has been profoundly shaken from the inside, since its enemies have succeeded in destroying the instrument of its achievement, namely, the Party that incarnates it.

The Ba'th Party was denied —although it had existed for thirty years, although it had always been the vanguard of the movement for national liberation, thanks to its unitary ideology and its Pan-Arab organization, and although it had supported the greatest Arab socio-political events —this Party was denied all rights to existence... But its authenticity, and that of the Arab Nation, was such that, despite all the blows it had received, the Party was able to renew and resume the combat, in a more unyielding and responsible form: that of the popular struggle.

Moreover, it is neither by chance nor by fortuitous coincidence that, when the June catastrophe arrived, too

many militants found themselves behind bars, while others were in exile.

Today, the conspiracy against the Arab Revolution is reaching such a serious state that one tries to make us accept defeat as an inevitable and irrevocable destiny. They try to turn capitulation into a doctrine and an authentic profession of fait and, in order to indict the division of our homeland, they provide new reasons for its existence (in order to pulverize the body of the Nation and to strip it of its identity). Now, in such circumstances, an immense task is presented: We must remain unshakeably steadfast to the concepts of the Ba'th; we must count exclusively on the popular masses, and work for revolutionary unity whose impulse is rooted in the deepest suffering and in the most formidable danger threatening us, the Zionist occupation of Palestine. Only this course will be able to lead us onto the course of liberation.

The Ba'thist movement has always expressed, and still expresses, the Nation's ambition to reach the stage of liberation, in other words, the stage where the anti-democratic separatist regimes, under-developed and incompetent, would be overcome, and where a popular and progressive unity could lead the battle for the liberation of Palestine. The Ba'thist movement, this movement of historical dimensions, has, like all other revolutionary forces which seriously struggle against colonialism, Zionism and the reaction, been torn apart by various crises and struck with numerous defeats. Moreover, these crises and defeats are only signs of the general crisis running through the entire Arab Nation.

The defeat of June, 1967 exposed this crisis. Since then, it has been necessary to extract all that has been learned from the stage that preceded it. We had to seek definitions for the new criteria on the basis of which revolutionary action should be directed toward the

future. In other words, the analysis of the current crisis of the Arab Revolution asserts itself by presenting new principles which constitute the point of departure for any attempt at redress. The writings of the founder and leader of the Ba'th are nothing other than an attempt made with this goal in mind. These writings have been brought together in a single work because they, as well as the dates during which they were prepared, form a continuous process of retrospective criticism of the past experience. This criticism, undertaken in the light of revolutionary criteria, should allow our action to reach a level of maturity, authenticity and invulnerability enabling us to overcome difficulties. They are addressed to the masses and popular base and, in the spirit of the author, they should constitute the source of the latter's inspiration, for whom this should be the point of departure for all action of historic scope. In fact, these tasks are not a simple register of past experiences. They also anticipate and foresee certain events which have actually happened. In this way we can see quite well that the Arab Revolutionary movement lacked neither maturity nor the capacity for analysis. Sometimes, in certain areas, it even went beyond the views of the international revolutionary movement and, already more than fifteen years ago, was able to determine the level which Arab revolutionary action should reach in its confrontation with its enemies.

As for its inability to learn the lessons of the past, and to respect the norms demanded by the historical stage, this is a characteristic inherent in the nature of organizations and regimes with petty-bourgeois tendencies. It is this inability, and the delay that it brings along, which, today, must be the object of every analysis. We must study it and take apart its elements in order that the Arab Nation be able to find its way amidst waves of falsification, attempts at misdirection, errors

and deviations which have marked the preceding stage. The new orientation of the Arab Revolution is a logical continuation, as the return to the revolutionary principles from which the Arab revolutionary movement had departed since the forties. Nevertheless, the links between this movement and the international revolutionary movement must be developed and deepened. The interaction between these two movements will, among other things, allow the contemporary Arab cause and the Palestinian struggles, which are at the very center of this cause, to avoid reversals.

The return to the popular masses is at the heart of our revolutionary principles. It represents a guarantee of their inviolability. The unity of the popular masses, their freedom to act for themselves and their ascent to the forefront of the Revolution are the prerequisites for the realization of Unity and for the liberation of Palestine.

The goals of Michel Aflaq's writings are to inform the popular masses of the problems suffered by the Arab Revolution, and to get them to participate in the resolution of these problems. His work, *The Point of Departure*, written between June 5, 1967 and the events of September 1970 in Jordan, proposes three fundamental themes for reflection in order to understand the crisis in which the Arab Revolution is currently floundering:

- I. Lessons learned from earlier experiences.
- II. Criteria that the national Arab combat must seek to attain and respect.
- III. The new foundations of revolutionary action.

### *I. Lessons learned from earlier experiences*

1. The return to the authentic source: the people, who must be kept in contact with all the truth, because the power of action rests on them alone.



2. The transformation of our struggle into a question of life or death. Thus defeat can become a genuine springboard for victory. It is also in this way that the Party and our Nation can be saved, since the contradictions among which they were floundering throughout the entire preceding period will be avoided. Finally, this unflinching stance will allow us to denounce those who claim to adhere to the ideology of the Revolution, whereas, in fact, they contribute almost nothing—or nothing at all—to the Nation and the Party. These elements have ensured themselves of several privileges, they have behaved like real mandarins, transforming power into an instrument which allowed them to change all the values of the combat. (*The Point of Departure*)

3. Henceforth, it is no longer permitted for the truth to remain buried, and for those who are innocent to pay for the guilty ones, for what sort of enthusiasm can be felt by a militant who, in the heart of his party, sees offenders covered with honor and glory? (Op. cit.)

4. A critical analysis must be undertaken to explain the errors and incorrect attitudes which, for one or two decades, have not ceased to be repeated, to grow, and to worsen, dangerously threatening the Arab revolutionary struggles. (Op. cit.)

5. The Party militants and the popular masses must be informed of all that is taking place. This is the only way of reaching a rectification of the previous situation and of clearing a path safe from all failure. (Op. cit.)

6. After the defeats it has suffered and after the catastrophe that has crashed down upon the Arab Nation, our Party can only continue to play its role if it becomes one again with its *raison d'être*, which is to build the future in a temporal perspective of several centuries. («June 5 and the Opportunity to undertake an Historic Action»)

7. The problem is not in the Revolution, itself, but in

the leaders who are spreading it. They are not at all interested in the masses. They ignore the latter's vital needs and cannot succeed in seeing what enormous potentialities the masses represent. They lead them while distrusting them, while doubting their abilities, while treating them like children incapable of knowingly using their liberty, and only good for carrying out the orders given to them. Considered to be ignorant, the masses did not deserve to be told the truth about the situation.

8. The catastrophe suffered in June can only become a point of departure for victory if it becomes a point of departure for unity. This is the fundamental task of our Party.

9. The defeat we suffered obliges us to take a new approach to the situation. We must proceed from a critical examination of several of our ideas. We must newly assure ourselves of the rightness and soundness of the theoretical principles which were presented at the very beginning of the Revolution. We personally believe that the task of the principal Party cadres is essentially ideological. It is their responsibility to analyse the current situation, in order to determine problems and shortcomings, and to assemble a critique of the current ideological principles. This theoretical work must not be limited to the framework of the Arab homeland. It must also take place in a comparative perspective, where international events are also questioned and studied. It must finally permit the definition of an authentic picture of revolutionary action. («Long-term perspectives of revolutionary action»)

10. It is necessary to restrain the impatience of the militants. They must acquire a profound understanding of the temporal dimension, in the light of that which prevailed in the course of the years when the Party was founded. They must also have a sincere faith in the

revolutionary ideology, as well as self-confidence in the face of any ordeal. In this way, certain of them will be able to dedicate themselves to long-term tasks, whose results will only appear in the distant future. If the Party favours this type of attitude, it will attract men who are not impatient —because they are not looking for immediate political success.

11. The national catastrophe experienced in June 1967 raises serious ideological problems. It leads us to ask ourselves how individuals, movements and political parties, who showed themselves to be incapable of rising to the level demanded by the national combat, would be able to react in order to overcome such a catastrophe; how would they be able to remedy this and to provide solutions for the problems it has raised? Will they be able to criticize themselves publicly? Will they be able to succeed in rectifying and defining the ideological principles and appropriate methods of action? Any revolutionary action is a long-term action. It demands much patience, continuous efforts, and indispensable qualities: objectivity, fidelity, endurance, and eminent qualifications.

12. The Arab Revolution has not yet found the practical formula which would allow, or even demand, that the greatest number participate in the combat and bring a contribution to it. In this way, the potential withheld by the popular masses would be used to its advantage. It is because this formula had not been found that the militants assumed the responsibilities even before the Arab revolutionary forces had been hardened by the experience of combat, and before all those participating in the Revolution were armed with a revolutionary consciousness and morale which permitted them to take on new responsibilities. These «disharmonies» are at the origin of many errors and deviations. The indulgence and facility with which militants were recruited, as well as the tendency to avoid all confrontation,

also played a harmful role. The Party has paid for all these inconsistencies. But after the reversals suffered in Syria on February 23, we are convinced that the losses are not too heavy, in that we will be able to profit from the lessons we draw from them. (Op. cit.)

13. Taking power and becoming engulfed in it before even being seriously prepared constitutes the most inextricable situation that the Party could experience. Most of us are conscious of the fact that our movement was a prisoner, and that its enemies made it say things that corresponded neither to its truth nor to its principles. Our movement was cornered into undertaking actions which had no correspondence to its profound essence, whereas throughout its struggle the Party had proven its mastery and self-control. No force in the world can make a militant party say something that it does not really believe, a pronouncement to which it gives no credibility, or to undertake an action which does not express its nature. The hostile propaganda campaigns conducted by enemies from all sides and by the colonialist states are incapable of striking a blow on an authentically militant party, of changing it, or of deforming it. If the Party remains steadfast to its militant line, all antagonistic attempts will remain in vain. But it will not be the same when the Party reaches power. (Op. cit.)

14. I am not saying that our Ba'hist comrades must renounce the power that they succeeded in taking in Iraq, but I think that the experiences undergone in the course of the last two decades, and particularly those of the years 1963-68, should not be forgotten. They must remain in our memories. We must record them in writing, explain them, and elucidate them. The leaders, especially, must grasp the scope of these ideas and must keep their memory alive. It is not impossible for them to approach these past experiences in a creative way, in order, today, to assume the responsibilities that have

fallen upon them with a new breath, improved methods, and a greater thrust. *This is not impossible but, on the contrary, it is also not easy: it is our task to stress this difficulty in order to avoid falling into errors which could be catastrophic.* (Op. cit.)

15. The regimes that claim to be revolutionary have abused the people. They have presented a false image of themselves to the people. They have tried to persuade them that the victory won in a single battle allowed the Arab Nation to achieve its greatest objectives. These false revolutions and semi-revolutions have preferred buying supporters instead of undertaking the education of the people in order to raise their consciousness, instead of telling them the truth. Distributing privileges, as actual bribes, to certain party cadres or to an administrative caste, these pseudo-revolutions operated as if the Arab Nation had already succeeded in eliminating the evils from which it was suffering, in triumphing over its difficulties, in removing from power those who wanted to enslave it and in defeating its enemies and those who conspire against it. («The Palestinian Cause and the Revolutionary Solution»).

16. The defeats suffered by the Party and the losses inflicted upon the Nation remind us that the road opening in front of us is a long one, that one must be armed with patience and endurance, and that one must agree to make sacrifices. Defeats and losses also teach us that leading a revolution is an arduous task and that the leaders can only ensure themselves of success if they view the action they lead in a temporal perspective which comprises the past as well as the future. Such a perspective would give them a clear and comprehensive vision of things and would also endow them with a deep revolutionary inspiration, with eminent spiritual and moral qualities. They would thus be able to turn away from fruitless notions, to escape futility, and to keep

from falling into struggles over offices of responsibility, childish quarrels which scarcely benefit the Revolution. («The Working Class is Our Hope»).

17. It is time for the Party to endow itself with authentically socialist and revolutionary structures. When recruiting, it must not limit itself to young people, intellectuals, teachers and professional people. In fact, and not only in its declarations and slogans, it must become a revolutionary socialist party, through its structures and members as well as through the cadres who direct it. In this way, it will avoid taking an incorrect path. («The Working Class is Our Hope»)

18. One of the fundamental lessons that we can draw from the defeat of June 1967 is that we must crush any tendency toward fanaticism and the monopolization of the struggle. This attitude, which prevailed during the earlier stage, deprived the militant of a great part of its popular forces. The new battle being prepared demands the participation of all the sons of the Arab Nation, or at least those sons convinced of its rights and faithful to its cause. Any fanaticism, exclusivism or internal struggle among the sons of the Nation must be eliminated.

19. The lessons that we can draw from the unfortunate experiences which the Party underwent during the almost simultaneous taking of power in Iraq and in Syria in 1963 can be narrowed down to a single one: the Party was not prepared to assume the enormous responsibilities involved in this taking of power in two Arab countries of this importance. («The Revolutionary Party is an Image of the Future of the Nation»).

20. In order to remain faithful to our Party and to our Nation in distress, we must never forget the lessons that the experience of 1963 taught us. We must neither give in to vanity nor refuse to grant importance to certain values and rules which necessarily accompany any revolutionary action, and which are the result of long

advances made by countries other than our own. These countries have already employed exhaustive efforts, led ceaseless struggles, and paid a heavy tribute in human lives. The principles and criteria of revolutionary action are not simple words which only serve to darken paper. They are the fruit of living experiences led by peoples. The loyal and honest revolutionary respects these principles and criteria, trying always to deepen their meaning and to practice them, even if this costs him more time and pain than it would if he tried to ignore them, to twist them through trickery, or to let himself be carried away by his caprices, sudden changes of mood, or uncontrolled desires. («The Working Class is Our Hope»).

21. It is through a theoretical flaw that the Arab Revolution has not borne all its fruits, that it has not achieved its objectives, and that it has not fully and perfectly realized its hopes. Its idea of the proletarian classes in general, in particular of the working class, was not really adapted to the situation. The role of the people was not appreciated at its actual value. The progressive movements and regimes never seriously gave their trust to the people and to the working class. If relations of trust had been established between the leadership and the masses, if shared respect and love had prevailed, there would never have been campaigns of misdirection, restriction of liberties, censorship, repression and terror. («The Working Class is Our Hope»).

22. In the course of the preceding years, we have been subject to regimes that claimed to be revolutionary but who, in reality, remained prisoners of their regionalism, holding onto a contemptuous attitude with regard to the people. These two faults prevented them from bringing the Revolution to its end. Adopting partial solutions, these regimes rapidly became obstacles to the deepening and victory of the Revolution.

23. An authentically socialist power is governed by

the working class. In this sense, we should pay less attention to the shortcomings from which it suffers than to the possibilities which it offers. We should think of what it can contribute and create, of its power of innovation for the life of the Nation and in the battle of destiny, not of the errors that it was able to commit in practice since these errors are only errors of detail, without serious consequences.

Here is the perspective that the Revolution, conducted on the scale of the entire Nation and in each of the Arab countries, is called on to adopt. Earlier, this Revolution was at the half-way point, and a decisive recovery can only take place if this radical solution is applied and maintained. In this way the Revolution will be able to go forward. All our actions, and even our life, at least in the decade to come must set out from this way of considering things, since it is only in this way that our Revolution will be healthy and profound, capable of confronting its enemies no matter what weapons they have at their disposal.

We repeat briefly —this principle leap consists of radically modifying our idea of the working class and the proletarian classes. (Op. cit.)

24. The transformations which took place in the Arab homeland were not sufficient to bring about disappearance of the fragmentation and to unearth its roots. They failed to eliminate its causes and the factors perpetuating it. It is for this reason that we have reached a stage where the Arab Nation finds its very essence and existence threatened, because the imbalance between our enemies and ourselves is substantial. Those who covet us and our wealth dispose of extremely powerful resources, and time will not work in our favour if we do not succeed in finding an accurate formula capable of correcting the methods of action used during the last two decades. The colonialists and all our other enemies follow the progress



accomplished by the Nation with fear. Their efforts are always directed against Arab Unity, and they try to hide the importance that this could have for the Great Arab Revolution. This is not surprising, since they, themselves, know that Unity, in itself, is capable of covering up all weaknesses and bringing an end to the persistent under-development. («The New Stage is a Stage of Foundation»)

## *II. Principles and Criteria of Revolutionary Action*

1. A party endowed with an historic mission is a party whose militants consider the revolutionary cause to be a question of life or death, accepting the supreme sacrifice in order to guarantee, without discontinuation, the serious historic role of this party.

2. For a revolution to succeed, the fundamental condition is that its leadership be formed of cadres whose degree of intellectual, psychological and moral maturity is sufficient. This maturity would allow them to fruitfully work together among themselves and to lucidly see the situation in which they find themselves, as well as the future in preparation in the short and long term. It will aid them in translating their doctrine into acts, in undertaking the right realizations and actions, and in finding adequate modes of cooperation and action in common with other militants. It will also aid them in being morally irreproachable and healthy in their daily lives. We will thus avoid the spectacle of a certain degradation of morals, of immorality, and of time lost through futile tasks sometimes given by the leadership, which coincide so badly with the responsibilities implied in the Revolution. («The Palestinian Cause and the Revolutionary Solution»).

3. Any revolutionary movement —particularly in the

case of an Arab movement working in this precise stage in the life of the Nation— knows, from the first days of its birth, that, for years, and even for decades, it will have to fight obscurantism and misery. Those who participate in this movement know that they have voluntarily presented themselves to defeat these evils and to save the Nation from the obscurity in which it flounders. It is on the basis of these facts that our Party has begun its march. It has always known that the path would be long and that the overwhelming majority of our people is made up of disinherited masses who share the most abject misery. It has also always known that the vanguard must retain the leadership of the movement, while agreeing to make the greatest sacrifices. Thus, the popular masses will progressively come to awareness in proportion to the progress of the vanguard. (Op. cit.)

4. One of the fundamental conditions that the revolutionary leadership must fulfill is this consciousness of history, profound inspiration and objectivity which can ensure a certain harmony and spirit of fraternity among the members of this leadership. Such qualities can be a source of enlightenment for the Party and for the entire people. They can establish a climate of general trust, bring about mutual respect among everyone, and open the way toward sacrifice. The Party and the people will thus live in an authentically revolutionary atmosphere where selflessness and the spirit of sacrifice prevail and where one works ceaselessly in order to realize long-term objectives. (Op. cit.)

5. After these intellectual and moral qualities, the members of the revolutionary leadership must fulfill a second condition: they must strive to act according to a pre-established strategy, a plan of action well-studied in all its aspects. In addition, this plan of action must be perfectable, modifiable and amendable. (Op. cit.)

6. The Revolution takes place in stages, and it

demands scientific knowledge and adequate planning.

7. For socialism to have meaning, for it to be a fruitful field of action, the Nation and the homeland must be protected. We must save our lands and defend them with vigilance. We must recover our occupied lands and fight against the colonialist and Zionist conspiracies. We must always refuse to be satisfied with half-truths. («The Working Class is Our Hope»).

8. Before taking on the responsibilities of power, the Party must be its own master, capable of ruling its own will and aware of the path that it is taking. It must constitute an unshakeable and indestructible unity. Within its ranks, perfect agreement must reign between the base and the summit. The base must be kept informed of all which is undertaken by the leadership. No detail must be excluded. All justifications and goals of actions must be demonstrated. In return, the leaders must remain in touch with the desires of the base, with its ideas, and with its eventual criticism—which should not remain unattended—and enroll them into militancy. All guarantees should be ensured in order that the will of the base not become easy prey to deformations and falsifications, in order that it not be taken lightly. Thus, the Party will always, and at all moments, know what it wants, what it is doing, and the path on which it has advanced. It will also easily be able to judge whether it has taken the right path, and evaluate with accuracy the way that remains to be travelled. If it applies these rules strictly, it will be able to avoid falling into error and to correct those errors which escaped it at the desired moment, i.e., at the moment when they were committed. In this way, we will avoid accumulating errors, establishing distrust, sowing doubt and creating bitterness. («The Revolutionary Party is an Image of the Nation»).

9. A party threatened with harm cannot bring the

struggle to its close, it cannot cure the Nation of all its problems and save the society. For the Party to succeed in its tasks, the condition is very simple. The Party, itself, must be healthy. Relationships among its members must also be healthy. Its ideology must be clear and its organization well-structured. A truly democratic atmosphere must prevail, which will permit it always to renew itself and adapt itself to all circumstances, to correct its errors, and to overcome its weaknesses, without being the victim of decay, without errors becoming the battle horse for ambitious opportunists from all sides, without bringing about anarchy and a spirit of destruction. (Op. cit.)

10. The Party will only be able to achieve total Arab unity if it brings about its own transformation, on the highest possible level, into an authentic kernel of this future unity. (Op. cit.)

11. The fundamental condition for the Revolution to be achieved is that the Party be healthy, from the summit to the base.

12. A revolution can not be authentic and deserving of its name unless it succeeds in awakening and liberating all the latent forces possessed by the people and in giving them form. It must allow all the potential possessed by the people to be utilized in order for the masses and the entire Nation to be capable of decisively confronting all their enemies, and of triumphing over them. Otherwise, this will only be an unfinished revolution, defective and struck by trouble which must be tracked down in order that its roots be exposed. (Op. cit.)

13. We cannot be socialists, or even claim to be, if we subjugate the working class and limit its role, while considering it to be foreign to us. («The Working Class is Our Hope»).

14. We must approach this period, where the Party

is assuming a great part of the responsibilities, while thinking of the great future events which concern the entire Arab Nation. The battle which we must necessarily wage demands the mobilization of all the potential of the Nation. Our idea of power, of the present authorities, of the militant struggle and of production, must be conceived in relation to the necessities of this inevitable battle. We must place no hindrance or obstacle in the way of the participation of all the popular social strata endowed with good intentions and convinced of our Nation's right to live in freedom, these people who are ready to struggle against colonialism, Zionism and all other external dangers. Certain individuals may not be in agreement with us on all these points, but if they share these fundamental convictions with us, the alliance is an impending necessity and a national duty. The achievements on the scale of each Arab country assume all their importance and have more impact when they serve the great objectives of the Nation and are oriented toward the battle of destiny. Whereas extremely serious dangers are threatening us, the borders of each of the Arab countries are lost in those of our great homeland. Nothing can better guarantee the independence and inviolability of each of these countries than the participation in the great national cause. («the New Stage is the Stage of Foundation»).

15. What can be the sign of the vitality of a revolutionary party? First, it is the membership of youth, then, that of the proletarian masses. Presently, the call which strikes a deep echo among the popular masses and raises them up is the call to the battle for liberation. («The Ba'th and Armed Struggle»).

16. The most important thing in the life of a party is the trust that must prevail among its militants. This must be placed above everything because it is likely to permit the militant to give his best and to place all his abilities in the service of the struggle. Along with this

trust go openness and dignity. It is the greatest value to which a militant can adhere. By definition, the militant accepts with full consent to be exposed to all sorts of dangers and to lead the life of a fighter. His only consolation, his only reason for existence and the force which gives him life is his attachment to moral values. The greatest calamity that can fall upon a revolutionary movement and annihilate it is the loss of these values and the disappearance of all trust, love and dignity. («The Ba'th in the Face of its Experiences and Great Tasks»).

### *III. Fundamental Principles Governing Revolutionary Thought and Action*

1. The Ba'th is an historic movement which works for the Nation in a vast temporal perspective. For it, militancy is the foundation and the base of the Party, the source of revolutionary ideology and morale. Militancy surpasses everything. Its goal is not to end up in power. It is more important than, and even goes beyond, power. The Ba'th also considers that one of its fundamental tasks is the deepening and promotion of popular struggles. («The Point of Departure»).

2. A party endowed with an historic mission is a party whose militants consider their cause to be a question of life or death, a party whose militants will agree to the supreme sacrifice as a guarantee of its historic role. Armed resistance, the «fedayeen» action, is the practical formula that can give militants the possibility to respond to this demand, since the popular armed struggle, conducted in the framework of a national front is, generally, the best formula for the battle. (Op. cit.)

3. The Ba'th Party cannot permit itself to remain on the defensive and to live in fear for the security of its militants. It can only be an offensive party. It must agree

to expose its militants to risks. It is attached to them and acts in ways that will keep them faithful, but it still would not hesitate to place them in the face of danger, to hurl them into difficult tests in order to evaluate their determination and loyalty to the Revolution, and their moral value. This practice can only better harden, deepen and consolidate their qualities. («June 5 and the Opportunity to undertake an Historic Action»).

4. One of the Party's first convictions, even before the war of 1948, and which it has never renounced, is that the Arab Nation is in a state of war. This is an unshakeable revolutionary conviction which neglects neither the nature nor the level of seriousness of the dangers that threaten the Arab Nation. Thanks to this conviction, the Party has been able to define all the demands of revolutionary action, and all the conditions to fulfill for this action to be serious and to allow the Nation to overcome all the obstacles which hinder its march toward liberation, progress and unity. («The Long-term Perspectives of Revolutionary Action»)

5. A Ba'thist can only have a profound and revolutionary vision of things if he sets out from the idea of Arab Unity, if he considers the Arab Nation to be a single whole and if he has an accurate idea of its state of under-development. If the unitary conception disappears, if it weakens and loses its consistency, giving way to regionalism, the revolutionary convictions will grow slack and, consequently, the level of the ideological and political struggle will be lowered. (Op. cit.)

6. Our fundamental principle is that the *raison d'être* of our Party is the historic mission with which it has been charged, and that it works for revolutionary transformations on the scale of the Arab homeland. (Op. cit.)

7. The great majority of the Arab Nation is made up of proletarians. This fact should be reflected in the

structures of the Party: the majority of its members should belong to the proletarian classes. («The Working Class is Our Hope»).

8. Our Party should be open to all militant revolutionaries. It should leave its door open to any man with good intentions who wants to contribute to and participate in the struggle. It must understand that a historical stage like the one we are crossing cannot tolerate a single horseman. All conceit and vanity must be eliminated. The Ba'th must become the party of the broadest popular masses, the party of all the militants and all the revolutionary movements that operate on the vast scene of the great Arab homeland. (Op. cit.)

9. There cannot be a specific and separate solution to the Palestinian problem. The Palestinian cause is a condensation of the entire Arab cause. It is the expression of the difficult situation that the Arab Nation, confronted with colonialism, Zionism and the reaction, is crossing. The liberation of Palestine will come about through the realization of the Arab Revolution. («Palestine is the Condensation of the Arab Cause»).

10. The Arab people's recourse to the popular armed struggle is the solution capable of endowing us with all the resources we need for recovering the usurped territories. Limited at its beginning, the armed struggle can grow and take the form of a total popular war. War is not reserved exclusively for armies. We must succeed in mobilizing all the potential of our people in order to be in a position to confront the serious dangers that threaten us. (Op. cit.)

11. Only unity is capable of eliminating the consequences of the defeat, of ensuring the victory over Zionism, over Israel, and over the colonialism that supports them. This unity, as conceived by our Party, must have a revolutionary content. Today, more than ever, the objective of our Party must be the realization of



unity. Ba'thists must therefore act according to a nationalist unitary logic and create an atmosphere favourable to the realization of their objective. The internal problems of the Party, as well as its policy as a whole, must be studied according to a unitary logic. The regionalism in which colonialism wants to enclose us must be rejected. The dream of the colonialists and Zionists is to definitively —or at least for several decades— prevent the realization of unity, since this would be the necessary and sufficient condition for Israel to continue to exist and to grow. This is also an indispensable condition of the colonialist monopolies to continue their project of looting the wealth of the Nation. («The Revolutionary Party is the Image of the Future of the Nation»).

12. The colonialist conspiracies can take the form of overt aggression when undermining the Revolution from within seems impossible. How must we respond? If we remain steadfast to our principles and unceasingly continue our march, colonialism, threatened and frightened for its interests, might resort to plotting and react violently and openly. Should we, inasmuch, conceal our principles and no longer speak openly of them? Must we accept this compromise? Must we postpone the culmination of the realization of our objective, or should we boldly and openly continue our march to its end? In this case, it would be necessary to extend the Revolution to the broadest strata of our people, to the most remote village of our country and to all the other Arab countries. If the Party seeks to fulfill this condition and to take advantage of the potentialities of our people, with a coordination and perfect harmony of these potentialities, and with the shortest possible delay, we will have the best guarantee of victory. We will possess a force of dissuasion capable of stopping the colonialist enterprise, and resources sufficient for hurling ourselves into the battle. (Op. cit.)

13. On the theoretical level, the Kurdish national movement can in no way be in contradiction with the Arab Revolution. If conflicts take place it is colonialism that provokes them. Sometimes it attempts to place leaders who are its lackeys at the head of the national movement, or, to thrust certain reactionary or regionalist Arab regimes into engulfing themselves in an overt confrontation with this movement. («The Kurdish Problem and the Arab Revolution»).

14. Arab unity can only be realized by the popular masses. It can only be a fighting unity and can only be maintained if the well-organized masses and armies defend it. Its horizon cannot just be the war of liberation. We must unite ourselves for the prospect of recovering our usurped territories. Colonialism and Zionism will not tolerate seeing us unified. It is for this reason that we must be armed and that unity must be offensive and oriented toward fighting. Who can lead us? Who can truly fight and supply this battle with men and munitions? It is the people, the classes of their majority, workers and peasants, who alone are capable of realizing unity. («The Role of the Working Class in the Heart of the Arab Revolution»).

15. At this decisive stage of our history, the Party needs two things: First, a militant leadership made up of highly qualified cadres with a high level of ideological consciousness, in order that they be able to draw up the strategy of the battle being prepared, without contest the greatest and most serious in our national history. Second, our Party needs to lead a profound and intense activity in the heart of the proletarian masses. It must raise the consciousness of the people, mobilize them, and organize them in order to seriously prepare them for the battle. («The Party in the Face of its Experiences and Great Tasks»).

16. We must remove our party from the framework of meeting rooms and salons. We must spread its principles, its possibilities, its organizations, its ideological studies, its plans and its projects, as well as its enthusiasm and determination, from this narrow framework where they are smothered, in order to diffuse them everywhere in this great Arab homeland and in the heart of the proletarian masses. We must sow the seeds, and not forget to tend to them daily. (Op. cit.)

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## Chapter XIII

# The Ba'th's «Eternal Mission»

No contemporary ideologist can afford to neglect the phenomenon of the non-crystallization of the various social classes in underdeveloped countries, and considerable attention should be given to its study, with a view to establishing its eventual ideological and political consequences. In a country suffering not only from the calamity of underdevelopment, but also faced with the challenge of the Zionist-imperialist reactionary alliance, and struggling, to make matters worse, with disunion and class-exploitation, any ideology based on the analysis of only one of these contradictions, is intolerable... Such an ideology would only establish links of diversion and subordination, simplified in the extreme, between the contradiction on which it bases itself and the principal contradictions which it omits.

In the experiments made by the national socialist Revolution and by the struggle for liberation, living reality evolves according to a particular dialectic, closely connected with the interaction of all the contradictions we have just mentioned. All incomplete theories, all superficial views, any form of logic, still working on the lines of the theoretical difficulties which characterized

the previous non-nationalist experience, are incapable of grasping this dialectical movement in a deep, exhaustive, objective and scientific manner.

With this truth well-assimilated, the Ba'th Party made an unassuming but none the less important endeavour, at the same time of a scientific, moral and completely revolutionary nature, which clarifies the deep character of the dialectical evolution of the current Arab revolutionary experiment. The Party strived to harmonize theory and practice, and its principles can be resumed in the three words —Unity, Freedom and Socialism. The Ba'th realized that the Revolution of the Arab Nation—this proletarian Nation which is «Balkanized», dominated by colonialism and is fighting for unity, liberty and socialism —is the ineluctable result of the nature of the contradictions prevalent in Arab society, of their specific quality and degree of maturity. In the eyes of the Ba'th, the contemporary Arab Nation's mission is to carry out this task, of a quasi-miraculous nature, right to the bitter end— the accomplishment of Unity, Freedom and Socialism.

Progressively, during the forties, the fifties and the sixties, this began to take effect, parallel to the development of the modern Arab revolutionary movement, giving to Arab revolutionary ideology the chance to get off the ground and to establish its fundamental principles. Events during this historic phase inevitably, logically revealed the mass of ideological and political contradictions in which political formations, straying from Arab revolutionary ideology and its militant organism, were immersed. These formations persisted in their obstination, settling for superficial imitations, and openly manifested their hostility towards Arab revolutionary ideology and its militant organism. Their impact diminished gradually, and when the Ba'thist movement gained importance their activity was reduced to ashes. It

was inevitable that, when Ba'thist ideology and logic gradually gained in importance in the direction of events, waves of obstinate, vindictive, presumptuous opposition should arise. Fortunately, they were of little effect, due to the birth of a new revolutionary Arab generation and to the presence of a host of friends, partisans and sympathisers at the Ba'th's sides. The most openly hostile enemies and the most dangerous—we may even say, the most inferior—were those who speak in the name of an ideology in no way opposed to the Ba'th—Marxism and Leninism, which they used as a weapon to combat Arab revolutionary ideology. These ill-disposed individuals, due to their social background and the way they live—sheltered from any real form of militancy—have assimilated neither the revolutionary nature of Marxism (outside the grasp of the pure, static, academic way of thought) nor the Ba'th's ideology. Their judgements were simply based on anti-Ba'thist prejudice; by refusing to make an objective study of reality they were intent on proving to themselves their own existence.

This type of adversary which the Party cannot avoid—and certain of which claim to be its friends—lavish advice and, while dispensing speeches of «helpful criticism» concerning the Ba'th, in fact play the role of anti-nationalist «saboteurs» and of unscrupulous imposters. They are far-removed from the scholar's objectivity of mind or the militant's audacity when, with neither purity nor loyalty, they make tendentious interpretations of the Party's texts, quoting extracts out of context, which have no longer any meaning. They give to the Party's ideas a significance which has never been upheld. Their bitter, unjust criticism of the Party's thought and its revolutionary ideological principles find in this way a pretext for target-practice.

In the past, the Party gave no importance to this kind of matter—nor, in fact, to their authors, who do

injustice to Marxism by using it for dishonest ends. The Ba'th's ideologists with, at their head, their founder and leader, feared, however, that such people might in the end attain the aims prescribed in their slander-campaigns. Such an attitude, not only encumbered the Nation's potential with sterile activities, but also turned the Arabs from their principal objectives and also prevented the establishment of a fruitful dialogue between Arab revolutionary ideology and Marxism. A dialogue could have had a positive value but the evil intentions which intervened, the absurd ostracism of certain elements, created a destructive climate which deformed the Party's links with the international revolutionary heritage.

Today, hostile and malevolent campaigns against the Party's ideology take the form of conspiracies, adding to those already hatched to bring about the downfall of the Ba'th. We must therefore be explicit and denounce these campaigns in the name of the Arab Revolution and its current revolutionary ideology.

The idea of the «eternal mission» in one which has been particularly used as a warhorse by those who, basing themselves on leftist materialistic points of view, have directed their fire against the Party's ideology. It is certainly a disconcerting hazard —but one of weighty significance— that, at the very moment when the Party finds itself alone, along-side the Arab «fedayîn», never to have capitulated, ever continuing its resistance to attempts to liquidate the Palestinian cause, a book should be published defending leftist attitudes and pushing the Party's ideology into the same bag as international Zionism. The author claims that the idea of the «eternal mission» is the same thing as: «You are the greatest nation created on earth»<sup>1</sup>, that it brings to mind the

1. A verse of the Coran, highly controversial in the Arab Moslem world (editor's note)



thought of the «elect», which is the very basis of the Zionist movement's ideology. For the author, Ba'thist ideology and Zionist ideology rise from the same fountain-head the bourgeois idealism of German philosophers. He loses himself in comparisons and false allegations, making no reference whatsoever to the Ba'th's thinking in relation to the idea of the «eternal mission». He does, however, go as far as to label himself «a leftist, objective thinker of scientific approach...»

Once we learn that these criticisms are considered to be the most «judicious» ever made of the Party, we fully understand why the Party paid no attention to them, seriousness, objectivity and progressive inspiration being here singularly lacking. Any connection with marxism —an ideology which is ever modern, constantly renewed and comports itself with gravity and objectivity —is totally illusory.

Contrary to the beliefs of these dunces of dialectical materialist philosophy, the idea of a «mission» is not a concept monopolized by German idealist philosophers. Were their knowledge in this department matched by clear vision, rather than a static one, of historical materialism, they would understand that throughout the evolution of history, social classes have also, and from the beginning of time, had «missions» to accomplish. Marxism recognizes this when it attempts to show the progressive role played by classes in their formative period and the negative role that they end up by playing when they create a barrier to progress. In this way, feudalism, the bourgeoisie, the proletariat had —or have— as such, a progressive role in history. In «The Holy Family» written by Marx and Engels and published in 1844, the philosophy of Hegel and his dialectical method is criticised, and the idea of the «historic mission of the working-class» asserted; the authors define the particularities of this class and its aptitudes for the

accomplishment of its role in history. In the same way, a work published in the USSR in 1959, entitled «The Principles of Marxism-Leninism», demonstrates that current Marxist ideology insists on the characteristics peculiar to the working-class the only truly revolutionary class in society. Though deprived of the ownership of means of production, this class is numerically the strongest in capitalist society and the most capable of being organized. According to this work, it is the class of the future and that which has a historic mission to accomplish.

The Arab Nation, condemned to live for long enough in conditions of under-development and disunion, condemned to suffer not only class oppression but also the imperialo-Zionist occupation, constitutes, as a whole, an enormous proletariat, submitted to the exploitation of privileged, minority classes. The social stratification at the heart of the nation is in gestation. Its mission —the struggle for liberation and unity against exploitation and colonialism— has a remarkable revolutionary content. It can free Arab potentialities thanks to a truly revolutionary ideology and organization, and also, thanks to the tactics of wide-spread alliances, capable of mobilizing the whole life-force of Arab society and of representing the plenitude of this militant nation.

Can its adversaries, however, understand the situation in its reality? Where will they ever end, these writers and leftist thinkers, who from time to time take up cudgels against the Party? Their vigour appears inextinguishable when they launch out on the Ba'th, with no knowledge of its ideology, unjust and lacerating in their methods, hurling stones in falsely-painted Marxist colours.

## *The Ba'th's Statements Concerning its «Eternal Mission».*

In three separate articles, Comrade Michel 'Aflaq states the true significance and the content of the «eternal mission». The first, written in 1946, is entitled «The Arab Mission». The other two «Significance of the Eternal Mission» and «The Eternal Mission» appeared in 1950. These three articles are grouped —with others— in his work entitled «On the Way of the Ba'th» on pages 101-103 of the 4th edition. (In Arabic, the title is *Fi Sabîl-al-Ba'th*). The main aspects of the concept can be resumed as follows:

1. *The Arab Mission*: Surpassing of the self, uprising against the state of disunion and the realization of unity.

«Our mission is inseparable from the life of the Nation. It is for the Nation to accomplish this Mission, just as a man bears in him the right to reach out towards heroism and towards the soul of greatness... The accomplishment of the mission signifies for the Nation the surpassing of purely material activities and of debilitating egotism, that the Nation may rise to become a guide and an example for humanity, that it may become a source of light for other nations. The Ba'th's watchword "the eternal mission" is not concerned with farfetched objectives, out of touch with reality; it brings to mind, first of all, immediate tasks of the present. This watchword indicates that the Arab Nation is refusing the artificial and temporary state of disunion in which it finds itself today. The Nation is stretching out towards unity, not only on the level of its territories, but also on a spiritual plane, on the level of its aspirations and its deepest yearnings.»

2. *The eternal mission*: Concretize the organic links between the past, the present and the future.

«This Nation which expressed its genius and its way of being in many and varied manners, as in the legal system of Hammourâbî, in pre-Islamic poetry, in the religion of the Prophet Mohammed, and in the culture of the Abbassidia period of Al-Ma'moun, demonstrates one and the same sensitivity throughout the march of time, and it has only one objective in spite of phases of decadence and dryness».

3. *The eternal mission*: The establishment of deep bonds between nationalism and general human principles.

«Some people assert that "Arabism is above all else". This statement bears a dangerous thought. If we say the same words, we say them with a radically different meaning: Arabism, for us, is beyond private privileges and interests, beyond individualism. Right and Justice, are, in fact, beyond Arabism, the renewal of which is without guarantee, unless it can become one with the invariable principles of Justice. Our watchword must, therefore, be: Right and Justice must remain over and above Arabism, until the day when Arabism becomes one with Right and Justice.»

4. *The eternal mission*: Awaken the rebirth of the Nation.

«The Arab mission today is to provoke a movement towards the re-birth of their Nation. This is the greatest service they can render to humanity, for human values can only grow and become vigorous in a healthy society. The eternal mission of the Arabs lies in understanding the present social reality, in assuming the tasks that its modification entails and in being able to respond to the requirements of the conjuncture. Eternity is not something beyond our reach; it is not something outside a temporal framework. It rises, on the contrary, out of the

deep reaches of the present. If Arabs are able to grasp this feeling for eternity and are able to live it wholly, faithfully, genuinely, they will certainly be able also to accomplish their "eternal mission"».

5. *The eternal mission*: Strong militant, subjective, effort.

«The eternal mission of the Arabs is not a thing of the future; it is already in the throes of accomplishment. It is not a static thing, nor is it devoid of bonds with the soul, with life and the experiences of the Nation's Sons. It is closely identified with the determination which encourages the Arabs to take their fate into their own hands, to study their present problems, bravely and with temerity, and which encourages them to accept effort and hardship for the sake of their rebirth. Is is equally their sensitivity to the ills and calamities which have smitten their lives and their society, their sincerity, and their courage to look at and recognize their own defects and above all, it is the rapidity and the vigour with which they seek their own salvation, relying only on their own resources, with never a call for help from "outside"».

6. *The eternal mission*: A living, genuine revolutionary experience.

«Some people think of the mission as something static, a collection of objectives unrelated to life, or they await the day when the Arab National will be ready for its accomplishment. As far as we are concerned, we are not thinking about the civilization which this mission can enable us to create in the immediate present. In our eyes, it is a deeper, more effective matter. It is a living experience, in which the whole Nation is fully implicated, both in its existence and its vitality and through which it is trying to conquer the ills from which it suffers, refusing all superficial half-solutions, all trickery, all ambiguity.»

Such are the governing ideas which have fed the Ba'th's ideology as far as the concept of «the eternal mission» is concerned. If we try to re-state the extracts from Michel 'Aflaq's texts in condensed form, we can say that the mission is composed of the following principles:

1. A surpassing of the self, an awakening to counter disunion, and the realization of Arab unity.

2. The awakening to the Nation's personality; the consolidation of its identity through the creative links between the past, the present and the future.

3. The connecting of nationalism to general humanistic principles, so revealing its true bearing and importance in human civilization, together with its international dimensions; nationalism is then seen as one of the constituents of humanity's long march towards progress. In this context, all forms of Chauvinism and racism are to be avoided.

4. The realization of Arab unity, the building of socialism within the framework of popular democracy; in other words, awaken a resurgent movement of the Arab Nation.

5. The display of deep, subjective militant, efforts, which should be the expression of an acute sense of responsibility as far as the Nation and humanity in general are concerned.

6. The pursuit of an authentic, living, revolutionary experiment, capable of making a contribution to world revolutionary ideology, of deepening its values and adding to the evolution of militant methods. The Arab Nation's contribution would be of value on account of the depth of its suffering, the sacrifices it is making, and will continue to make in the future, and its endeavours for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

What is to be retained in the preceding passages, is

the fact that Arab revolutionary ideology concedes nothing to the Arab Nation (which is carrying out its revolutionary experiment in the framework of those of the Third World) that Marxism does not concede to the proletariat. Marxism grants a historic role to the proletariat, which, in advanced industrial society is called upon to participate in the general march of humanity in a revolutionary direction.

Any thinker who purports to belong to the Left should rejoice when remarking that scientific Marxist analyses when applied to highly developed societies, where the class-struggle is the fundamental contradiction, are in perfect harmony with analyses of Arab revolutionary ideology, concerned with under-developed, exploited and disunited societies. For these latter the struggle for socialism is one and the same as the struggle for liberation and unity. Struggle for progress is parallel with struggle for subsistence and auto-determination. The historic phase through which the Arab Nation is at present passing, with its current developments, furnishes concrete proof of the exactitude of the analyses made in the perspective of Arab revolutionary ideology. This ideology coincides naturally with Marxist analyses and such a coincidence is, alone, an indication of the falsity and hipocrisy of the logic of those who conspire at one and the same time against Marxism and Arab ideology.

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## Chapter XIV

# An alternative to Arab «Conferences at the Summit»

When the League of Arab States was created in 1945, our Party's reaction was that such an institution was «a consecration of Balkanization, incapable of expressing the will of the Arab Nation, being made up of official representatives of Arab governments»<sup>1</sup>.

The Party requested the creation of a «Popular Arab League, expressing the interests of the people and their national objectives, which would succeed in establishing a wider field of action and a more favourable climate for the development of popular struggle for independence and total Arab unity»<sup>2</sup>.

In 1950, the Party's balance-sheet of the situation resulting from the first national catastrophe, was inspired by the same revolutionary principles and were the expressions of a scientific, exhaustive analysis of the Arab reality:

«The Palestinian War has been for Arabs a harsh warning, opening their eyes to the Nation's gravest defects. They have realized that the principal cause of

1. *Nidhal al-Bath* (The Bath's Struggle), vol. 7, p. 60.

2. The same work, p. 128.

their defeat could not be attributed only to the conspiracy of foreign States, nor to the inadequacy of their armaments; the structures of under-developed society, dominated by feudalism and reaction, contributed largely to defeat»<sup>3</sup>.

At the beginning of 1968 the Party drew up a balance sheet of the situation immediately following the second national catastrophe of June 5th, 1967, during its IXth National Congress. In their own words, this catastrophe was «the breaking-point between two distinct historic phases, and announces a new phase similar to that of the forties»<sup>4</sup>. As far as the causes of the catastrophe are concerned, the Party states:

«The causes of defeat are not only external; they are equally closely related to the situation through which the Nation is passing, to its inability to surpass itself in the confrontation of its real difficulties and in the utilization of its latent potential... June 5th was the logical end of the internal evolution in the national conjuncture, from the first defeat inflicted on the Arabs by Zionist aggressors in 1948 until the fall of the United Arab Republic in 1961, the failure of the Charter of April 17th and the two "coups d'etat" of October 18th, 1963, and of February 23rd, 1966»<sup>5</sup>.

The conclusions drawn from this analysis gave rise to a new attitude among militants. They had lost confidence in official policy, which had been out-distanced by events, and found to be unadapted to the situation. Gradually, they adopted a more distant attitude towards regimes and political groups in power, which had no longer any reason for existence, and came to place their hopes in rising forces able to respond to the exigencies of the new phase.

3. *Nidhal al-Ba'th* (The Ba'th's Struggle) Vol. II, p. 36.

4. Report on the Strategy of the Phase, p. 3.

5. The same, p. 34.

The failure of the Arab summit conference at Rabat confirmed militants in their new attitude. This failure showed clearly that political «summits» had had their day, that their only reason for existing so long had been due to the emptiness of the arena and the absence of alternatives, capable of putting an end to an abnormal situation in which the consequences of defeat were perpetuated. It had become indispensable to find an alternative, which, would obligatorily be based on the objective, scientific analysis of the current phase, if it were to be thoroughly efficacious.

In the section of the Report of the IXth Congress of the ABSP dealing with the strategy of the phase we read:

«The last catastrophe which has befallen us confirms anew that the Arab leaders who attempted to deal with problems created by the defeat of 1948 have once again suffered a severe blow»<sup>6</sup>.

In this report, the word «leaders» does not indicate officials only on the level of governments and regimes. It also concerns those responsible for organizations and popular political forces.

According to our Party's revolutionary vision of things, «summit» policy is not the only one destined to failure during this phase. All other our-dated methods, all other revolutionary options previous to the June defeat, are destined to end in a blind alley.

«Political forces based on a regionalistic point of view, who try to impose their dictatorship on a national scale (relying on bureaucracy, and preventing the popular masses from playing their rightful role in battle), who have gravely diminished popular organizations and syndicates and whose prejudicial actions concerning unity have in the long run dominated events»<sup>7</sup>, have played and continue to play a negative role.

6. Op. cit., p. 34.

7. Op. cit., pp. 3-4.

In the same way, the policy of certain factions, «a policy characterized by its ostracism and its fanaticism, by its stagnation and its inability to dominate and to adapt to new situations, which gives rise to unhealthy rivalry between parties and sows discord in the heart of Arab forces, (giving greater importance to secondary contradictions, opposing them one to another, than to the primordial contradiction, opposing all to the enemy from without)», is equally condemned to failure. Its persistence after the second national catastrophe is, in every way, similar to the desperate attempts made at an official level within the framework of the Arab «summit» congresses.

In our quest for an alternative formula, we must therefore bring our attention to bear on events on both an official and on a popular level.

Following on the national catastrophe of 1948, three methods of action were in practice.

1. Terrorism and political assassinations; several political organizations had recourse to this type of action—the Moslem Brothers in Egypt, the Arab Nationalists in Jordan, the Syrian Nationalists in Syria and in the Lebanon...

2. Military «coups d'état»; in more than one Arab country, their authors succeeded in removing from power feudal and bourgeois minorities, then adopting—outwardly at least—the demands of the opposition and rising progressive forces.

3. Popular action of national character; it is most particularly our own Party, the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, which promoted this formula and is totally engaged in its activity.

During the period between 1948 and 1967, the two first-named action-methods were definitively condemned to failure and multifarious conspiracies were hatched against the third.

The defeat of June 5th tolled the knell of certain action-methods on both official and popular levels. Defeat showed up their superficiality, their inefficiency and their clumsiness. Amongst all other formulae belonging to the previous phase, only democratic, revolutionary action in the framework of a national front, practising armed combat, can for the present find a justification. It is the only method capable of earning the confidence of the masses, of mobilizing their latent power and of freeing their combativity, the only method capable of fashioning our Nation's history.

Three years have gone by since the June defeat, but, sad to say, no action-method within the aegis of a common front has been attempted, either on a regional or on a national scale. Arab Resistance is itself undergoing the disparity of revolutionary forces and finds itself unable to surpass itself. For the Arab revolutionary masses this simply means that no alternative formula has hitherto been found—either on government level or on that of popular organizations—to palliate the inefficiency of action-methods in use since defeat.

The democratic revolutionary action which our Party has undertaken to lead since its inception—and which is, in its view, the only means of remedying past mistakes and giving Arab struggles their unity and strength and also a Pan-Arab dimension—is today faced with several obstacles and trapped in certain corridors. This brings us to the conclusion that regimes and political movements which attempt to hinder revolutionary action—as long as they continue to practice anti-revolutionary and anti-democratic methods, the failure of which no longer requires proof—will find themselves submitted to internal and external pressure and exposed to crises and explosions from within.

Democratic revolutionary action gives its full confidence to the masses; it believes in revolution, in both its

theoretical and practical dimensions; it is opposed to bourgeois democracy and to «petit-bourgeois» bureaucracy for the simple reason that its leaders undertake to respect, absolutely and unshakably, the interests of popular masses, and their aspiration for unity and socialism. Such action is no longer the expression of lower middle-class or pseudo-revolutionary policy. The phase through which we are going, on which defeat has left its mark, exacts from us true revolutionary action. We must find a formula which will give free rein to a form of action devoid of all regionalistic tendencies—both on an official and a popular level—which rejects class-collaboration and all types of organization and ideology not truly revolutionary.

A qualitative leap is indispensable, if we are to conquer difficulties and obstacles and if revolutionary action is to reach its plenitude, all the more so in that this action is the only one able to replace the formulae and methods which failed between 1948 and 1967.

Knowing well, from past experience, that inaction is sterile, we cannot count on a miracle to help us make this leap. In fact, it can be stated that this modification is already in the making.

There are certain signs which have appeared since the June defeat: the Revolution of July 17th in Iraq, the birth of the Arab Liberation Front, events prefacing change in Lybia and in the Sudan... Movements of this sort will stop half-way unless they manage to surpass themselves in response to the exigencies of the phase. They will have to undertake profound revolutionary action, characterized by a greater attention to ideological combat. This would enable them to trace a clear path, to assert their own identity and to define correct revolutionary criteria to guide their steps bit by bit. They will also find themselves obliged to make the working-class cause their main preoccupation in a serious and effective way,

and also to create, as rapidly as possible, more evolved structures in their revolutionary apparatus. They will also find themselves obliged to put more confidence in the masses, to heighten popular political awareness, to reinforce revolutionary attainments and to give to the widest strata of population the possibility to reach positions of command at the head of the militant movement. Finally, they will have to keep their revolutionary impact; this will enable them to gain more and more ground and the confidence of the masses. They will so prove themselves capable of resolving the most arduous problems, of attacking the most insurmountable obstacles, of breaking asunder the heaviest chains, always with scientific methods and an elevated sense of the historic responsibility now devolving upon them.

It is an indispensable condition to the discovery of an «alternative formula», that these subjective exigencies shall find a solution. If this condition is not fulfilled on a regional and national scale, we can hope for neither popular adherence, nor a serious undertaking, nor support for common action and armed combat.

In order to resolve one or other of these problems, before which those in authority during the previous phase hung their heads, a complete melting-down of ideological principles, organizational forms and action-methods will have to be undertaken. This is the primary objective condition to enable us to realize all that is possible in the framework of regimes and present organizations.

The Kurd question in Iraq is, one of the many problems which the phase previous to defeat left in abeyance. At that time, patriotic, progressive forces were divided among themselves and tearing each other apart. The sequels of chauvinism, individualism and the inability to understand the necessities of the phase of events and the signs of evolution in the modern world, were still rife. No estimation of the eventual importance of the

solution of this matter in the light national and international opinion, had been made. It was our Party which perceived its importance. It was essential that this conflict should come to an end, for the Ba'th had been the object of slander-campaigns on a vast scale, putting in doubt its humanitarian ideology and its progressive character.

The solution of the Kurd question and of all other fundamental problems which are, in the last analysis, all decisive for our primordial cause —that of Palestine—exacts from us enormous effort. We must gird ourselves with revolutionary ideology, act objectively, know how to respond to the necessities of this phase, and have a clear, long-distance view of events.

It would be unreasonable to consider a man to be a socialist if he were incapable of understanding the Kurd question, which is essentially a national problem and one which lies in the direction of the general evolution of humanity.

No-one can claim to be a Nationalist without recognizing the militant unity between the Arab and Kurd masses. One can be neither a nationalist nor a socialist unless one envisages the solution of the Kurd question as a necessity and a valuable asset to the nationalist and socialist cause. This solution implicates the destiny of the Kurds and it is equally a necessity for the Arab people, most particularly in the present highly important circumstances.

A sound, pacific solution must be found to this problem, and to all other of equal importance; this necessitates the total smelting of criteria and methods which, in the past, restricted organizations, Arab regions and the Nation as a whole, and prevented revolutionary capacities from having free play. When these criteria have been modified, we shall find the «alternative formula» to replace Arab political methods on an official



and popular level which have come to grief and brought the Nation to the verge of catastrophe. Popular strife will then attain its «summit» and will replace the inept policy of «congresses at the summit». Only then shall we begin to rid ourselves of the evil which has led the Arab Nation to disaster.

1970



## Chapter XV

# The University and Revolution \*

The profound emotion which laureates of Bagdad University know on this glorious day, the joyfulness which has come to crown a stage in their lives —perhaps the most perfect in a man's life— the overflowing heart that brings tear of gratitude to the eyes of parents, the memory shared by those who have already experienced this self-same joy, these are the greatest gift Bagdad University can offer to our withered Nation, ever smarting under the memory of the catastrophe of June, 1967.

Is there anything more beautiful, in the eyes of our glorious Arab Nation, than this annual celebration, laden with hope and optimism, where Iraq offers to the Nation a new generation of devoted workers, thinkers and specialists, who will, with their own hands, fashion the future of Arabism? On such occasions our country strives to underline its full significance; today we are inaugurating a new university tradition by inviting an Arab speaker. Iraq in no way seeks, by such a gesture, to capture an exotic bird beyond its grasp —such an

\* A speech made at the closure ceremony of the Academic Year 1968-69 at the University of Bagdad.

illusion would dissolve on sight— not does it seek to give homage to the speaker's personality particularly in a case like my own, where nothing worthy of homage has been accomplished. Iraq only wishes to high-light the importance of and the nation's interest in the festivities surrounding the closure of the Academic year. This goes to show that our country, which is one of the purest sources at which liberated, progressive, revolutionary Arabism can quench its thirst, has realized, long before all other Arab countries, the national dimension of university activities and understood that the University must evolve in a clearly-defined socio-political framework.

In a world such as ours, and in a historic phase such as the one through which we are passing, the University is called upon, beyond all other institutions, to contribute to the transformation of reality, to go beyond the disunion, under-development and exploitation, which today burden Arab society. The University cannot be ignorant of other countries, nor can it adopt the spirit of disunion, nor traditional schemas and way of life. Otherwise, it would fail in its vocation and become one of the constituents of the very decadent reality it is its duty to combat. Would it not be a tragedy if the University were to remain isolated from the socio-economic framework in which it functions, if it were unaware of the evolutionary movement of society and if State projects, lines of action and realizations were to out-distance university programmes and publications? Would it not be a drama if the University were to go on straining after individualistic abstract aims, far removed from the struggle, whilst the whole social structure is faced with aggression of a barbaric nature, never encountered in the history of humanity? Would it not be absurd to continue, within the university framework, the study of liberal economy, while society was pro-

gressing rapidly towards socialistic transformations?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Isolation of this kind would run counter to the nature of our period and to the evolutionary movement of history. It is for this very reason that we have seen our students, during latter years and in countries all over the world, expressing their dissatisfaction by uprisings and, in many cases, by violent manifestations. The artificial situation created by isolation is an explosive one. Relations between members of a university become warped and are undermined. The scholar is cut off from life, the scientist is reduced to the function of a «tape-recorder», registering without reaction instead of searching and questing. And students become anxiety factors, when they are not real trouble-makers. Bagdad University, which high-lights the national importance of the closure celebrations, thereby proving the value it attributes to them by inaugurating this new traditions, is, more than any other Arab university, prepared to forge ahead in this new phase. Its laureates will stand as an example and a pole of attraction for intellectuals and Arab militants in the current stage.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The University is called upon to play a major role in the building of the Arab future. This essential institution has always played a cardinal part in the evolution of societies and in the flowering of civilization. It is not by chance that learning, in the history of humanity has always given first importance to higher studies, then to secondary and finally to primary teaching, at which point the intellectual aristocracy finally gives way to the democratization of education. This has been the process in many countries.

In the Arab homeland, we find ourselves faced with a specific situation. Our universities were originally conceived as exact replicas of the universities where our

professors were educated. Programmes, schemas, methods were copies of those prevalent in the countries which colonized us, occupied our lands or exercised a mandate over them. This slavish imitation is one of the reasons for our occidentalization during the period the Arab Nation was seeking itself and a definition of its identity. For over half a century, Arabs approached their problems and tried to understand and fathom themselves, using ideas borrowed from the West. On top of this, the loan was used mechanically, without the adjuvant of imagination or creativity.

We tried, personally, to explain the birth and development of these faculties through our country's internal needs, by writing the history of the eighteen faculties and institutes depending on Bagdad University. Our attempt was made in vain, as was also the case when we made a comparative study of the faculties and institutes of other Arab countries. The reason for this is that the birth and evolution of these institutions can not be explained outside of the psycho-social and intellectual climate reigning at the time of their creation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The time has come for Arab universities to go beyond this stage of imitation and seek for authenticity. Every factor in our present national situation reminds us of the need for such a movement, which must take place within institutions and modify the structures which will help to define our Nation's future. Only too often have we looked beyond our frontiers, beyond the frontiers of the Arab homeland, beyond our own history. We have looked in one direction only, to the West —source of our social misery and of our National distress. We have not yet looked at our own reality; we have not yet sought to assert our own identity, to express our own beings through our aspirations. We have neglected our history, we have never traced back our past to the time when the

first universities (An-Nidhâmiyya and Al Moustansi-rriyya) radiated across the world. As long as we continue in this view, we shall never be able to progress on a harmonious path where our united being can be given full expression and where we no longer suffer dissection, no longer from schizophrenia.

Dear Students, you have just finished your studies. This struggle, this quest for an identity, for a personality, this search for authenticity which your University is leading, is one aspect of the great national battle. Whether you wish it or not, it will figure as the major epic of your lives, once you leave university. You will have to choose between a superficial, isolated existence, colourless and unattractive, or a heroic life, intense and magnificent, in harmony with the necessities of the stage through which the Nation is passing. In either case, you should know that your qualifications and your devotion can only find their true place if you have a clear, correct view of contemporary realities and the present national conjuncture. You are called to live in a new world, the world of the 20th Century, born after the Second World War and at a particular historic phase, that of the current Arab Revolution.

The suffering which accompanied the birth of the world which is yours has attained a maximum of intensity; the human race lost forty-one million victims, in the last war. Those to whom it has been given to live in the preceding periods and who survived the Second World War, are unanimous in stating that the world of today is the strangest and the most remarkable imaginable, and that it differs profoundly, even totally, from all that went before. Our epoch is that of revolutions and deep transformations, just as much in political and technological fields as in those of demography and pedagogy. It is the epoch of «more and more-rapid explosions», which break asunder political, economic,

social and cultural structures. This is the world in which you live, dear laureates, a world in mutation, changing, characterized by a sort of perpetual motion.

The world is in search of a new civilization and is developing an increasingly critical and contentious spirit. Everything is put in doubt; concepts and traditions are accused if they have prevented the solution of problems which have to be faced. The body of the world and its mind have become gigantic. But as far as its soul and its conscience are concerned, they remain in an under-developed and decadent state; a few figures will express this better than anything else; —70% of world production is in the hands of 16% of the earth's population. The world leaves us breathless by its accumulated knowledge; whoever has cast an eye over works in a library, consecrated to space-research and technology, recognizes the truth of this. Progress in knowledge has become so rapid that scientists find themselves swept into a feverish race in face of the imperious need to discover something «new» in their own field. A modern physicist writes in this regard:

«If Einstein came back to life and tried to understand the thought-process of those who followed in his steps, and based, themselves on his discoveries, he would require to spend several years of study and research.»

Technology —this invention of the modern world— is beyond the comprehension of the majority of human beings. As a result, they feel alienated and reified, as J. Monod of the French Academy has written, finding themselves condemned to live and die without understanding the true picture of the present world.

We, children of the proletariat nations, who are defending a just cause, surpass ethically this self-same world which leaves us behind intellectually.

Einstein wondered, not without irony and a certain bitterness, at the end of his days, if he would not have



served humanity better as a plumber, repairing gas and water-pipes, in this disingenuous world wherein science is used for inhuman ends, far from his own aims.

Starting from the idea that the world is in search of a new civilization, students leaving university today to enter into productive life, must realize that creative effort—and not its paltry imitation—is the condition of a new humanity. We must promise to assume our own responsibilities and refuse to live as parasites at the expense of other nations. These students must also realize that the Arab Nation, fighting the forces of evil, represented at the present juncture by the colonial-Zionist alliance, is contributing to the edification of this new civilization. Combat will enable it to expand its horizons, acquire full realization and assert its values and virtues.

In this part of the world which is our own, Man is in the process of renewal and our Nation in the process of re-birth; together they confront the most redoubtable destiny, for all forms of conflict, and there are many at this time, are of great intensity. We shall have to pay an exorbitant price for peace, because war is for our enemy his true “raison d’être”.

We can only attain peace when Arab unity and socialism are established and we are completely free. A unified, free, socialist Arab Society, would be our strongest shield, the best guarantee for our security and development and the necessary condition for our contribution to the transformation of the present world.

None other than generation of revolutionaries can fill the conditions indispensable for the continuity of the Nation and its progress. As for you, who are about to enter productive life, you are going to be the best advance-guard for future generations. You belong to a «Balkanized» society in search of unity, an under-developed society hungering for evolution, a threatened society in need of defenders, capable of averting ever-present

dangers and transforming defeat into a new departure for victory.

Dear Colleagues,

There is perhaps no greater homage we can offer for all the efforts invested by you in this graduation class, than this ceremony where you have the joy of gratitude than the sight of your students rising to their name-call and walking to the rostrum to receive their diplomas; they are preparing, and of this you are aware, to enter society, to launch into the fray, to make their contribution to the edification of a new civilization in our world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This young academic generation whose success we are today celebrating, this generation of suffering, is well-prepared to prove their creativity in struggle, in the same way as their ancestors proved their genius in war-like and in pacific under-takings. In the same way that university-men traced the future of education in their countries during the First World War, our university-men and women will show themselves capable, through positive and negative combat, of preparing a prosperous future for their Nation. The importance of the struggle the Nation is called upon to lead is of such dimension that we can be instrumental in changing the life of humanity and contributing to the triumph of human values.

I congratulate you and wish you all success.

1969

## Chapter XVI

# Contemporary Arab Culture

The famous psychologist Jean Piaget once wrote, in connection with the general cultural crisis in the modern world, that we find ourselves facing a world which is culturally and ethically incomprehensible to us; we resemble the aging Esquimau, questioned by a scientist about certain rites and traditions to which his tribe was faithful, and of which he admitted that he understood nothing, who replied: «We are faithful to these traditions to stop the world falling apart!»

Fidelity to tradition, which characterizes under-developed societies, affects them with a kind of paralysis which outlaws them from history. Practically speaking, their traditions represent their only wealth and they are faithful to them because they are the only means of preventing total etiolation. According to Piaget, this same conservative attitude, in advanced industrial societies, hinders the process of adaptation to a new state of things born after the Second World War, but in gestation since the beginning of the 20th Century.

In this static state and conservative attitude, awakening becomes more and more acute in the post-war world as each day passes, and cultures which, in the

past, responded and harmonized with the conditions which gave them birth, find themselves today faced with a totally different situation, evolving at an increasingly rapid tempo. Even if these same cultures responded superbly, magnificently, to life's requirements in the past and to Man's intellectual search, even if they have profoundly marked minds, souls, the current of ideas and programmes of education, they find themselves today in a crisis of adaptation; for, in spite of the rich heritage by which they are sustained, these cultures cannot produce the answers to all the questions agitating the world. In the words of Maurice Crouzet, our epoch is in quest of a new civilization. («Encyclopoedia of the General History of Civilizations», Volume VII).

But what is such a civilization going to be like? What will be its characteristics? What kind of culture will it require? In other words, what scientific, intellectual attitude would best be able to respond to its content?

Philosophers, writers, sociologists have tried to apprehend and define such a civilization. The names they give it are as variegated as the view points they adopt.

### *A Civilization of Leisure*

Some thinkers gave it the name «Civilization of Leisure». They justify this by referring to the rhythm at which humanity is today progressing and to a certain vision of the future. In advanced industrialized societies, technical progress ensures higher and higher salaries and a proportionate increase in leisure time. Working-hours diminish and workers dispose of more free-time. It is possible for them to enlarge and deepen their cultural horizons and increase their knowledge.

In March 1964 Kenneth Taiwan suggested, in an article published in «The Observer», the creation of a

Ministry of Leisure. A group of sociologists examined every aspect of this problem in a collective work entitled «Towards a Civilization of Leisure», published in 1962. They stated that between 1850 and 1950, the weekly working schedule had been diminished by an average of thirty-one hours. The phenomenon accompanying this shortening of working-time puts in question the whole concept of leisure, as opposed to the phenomenon of the sacred nature attributed to work. The authors consider that the ideologies in vigour during the 19th Century (Capitalism, Communism and Socialism), made work the supreme value, the «god», in spite of the differences opposing them each to another. The raising of the standard of living in highly-industrialized countries, together with the material acquisitions that the working classes were able to obtain so ensuring them of increased security— and the dehumanization of work, resulting from the perfecting of technical methods of production (which, gradually, transformed work from a means to an end in itself) all contributed to giving to leisure a new and important significance. Gradually, Man is becoming responsible for his leisure-time and, in parallel, he is becoming more and more aware that education and traditional culture do not prepare him fittingly for his new responsibility.

How does the individual in our society spend his free time? Does he try to flee from himself by taking to drugs and alcohol or to trivial love-affairs? Does he, on the contrary, try to reach fulfilment by one means or another—reading, music, various social activities, or any other way of encouraging his personality to flower, to evolve and reach some sort of perfection?

An enquiry made in the United States on the way in which people spend their free time, gave the following results:

<i>Type of Leisure</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Television	57%
Visits to friends	38%
Gardening	38%
Reading newspapers	27%
Reading books	18%
Rides in the car	17%
Listening to records	16%
Various meetings	11%

A group of sociologists in France depending on Domagden, made an enquiry of the same type, which indicated that 37.5% of the population travel during their holidays. The French National Tourist Office foresees that this percentage will increase to 47% in 1970. When asked for the reasons which urged them to leave their country when they went on holiday, French people replied that they wished, above all, to change climate and atmosphere. They wanted to get away from television, the cinema, everything that made up their lives during their working-year. In other words, they wanted to cast off restrictions.

The desire to forget about work, and the restrictions entailed, encourage people to take refuge in Nature, camping for example. The number of campers in France, has risen from 200,000 in 1945 to six million in 1966.

Book-reading is also enormously increasing. In 1952, 40,000 tons of books were sold in France; in 1962, 70,000 tons. Pocket-books are the favourites; literary books are on the decline —31.5% of the general quantity of books sold in 1957 and only 28% in 1961. The percentage of scientific and technical books has, on the

contrary, increased from 17% to 24% during the same period.

Those who speak of a «Civilization of Leisure», indicate that these figures —and many others— are in direct relation to the general framework of our lives. In this moving world, where immense changes are taking place, the pace of historical evolution is accelerating. Change and innovation become the main characteristics of our existence. Evolution takes the form of deep and unpredictable mutations; an irresistible pressure and great effervescence leave us in doubt about our future. This is the reason why those who feel concerned try to sense the future correctly, to anticipate and to planify. Whether in the political, economic, social or cultural field, the disconcerting rhythm of evolution brought Gaston Berger, among others, to state that those born at the beginning of the century and survived two World Wars, knew three totally different worlds. The post-war world is the most remarkable, because of its accelerated rhythm, and people's lives, mass movements, and circumstances take on completely new orientations.

We can conclude from the above that concepts of time and space are considerably modified —in the direction of wholeness, of clarification and mobility.

In the past, Man lived in a static world, more or less closed in on himself. His universe was fragmented, and each fragment tended to be enclosed, with little contact with other fragments.

This is why the essential temporal pole was the past. The present was simply the prolongation of the past. The future did not constitute a fundamental pre-occupation. Today, on the other hand, the temporal pole of attraction is from the past to the future. Man's predominant thought is to forecast the image of the world in the decades to come. The space in which Man lived was equally limited. It was often restricted to his native

village. He went to his death without ever having visited the town, or else he lived in one sector of a town from which he never went out to visit the others. Those who knew their country from end to end were rare; rarer still were those who had been abroad. Nobody went round the world. Pioneers of space and their exploits never entered the imagination of Man in older days. Space, today has dilated. Means of transport have been more and more perfected; day by day, mass-media and space-discoveries make the idea of unity of the world and of the universe more real.

The spatial and temporal framework of our world has been enlarged. Expansion and generalization are becoming the principal characteristics of our world, and fear of the future its main preoccupation. Civilization of today is of a completely new type.

Those who believe in a «civilization of leisure» try to envisage future transformations and its consequences as far as culture is concerned, emphasizing renewal, expansion and planification. For this reason, they emphasize the need to reform educational methods and programmes, so that people will be better prepared for future changes. Plans must be made in every field of existence so that people can use their free time in such a way as to ensure renewal, in fullness and harmony. This is one of the chief axes of thought and one of the fundamental preoccupations of contemporary society.

### *Civilization of the Masses*

For another category of thinkers, contemporary civilization is that of the «masses». This name finds its justification in the fact that the post-war world has been the scene of mass movements on a scale never hitherto experienced. Some statistics taken from the United



Nations year-Book of July 1962 prove that this rising of popular masses is considered, and rightly so, as the most outstanding phenomenon of the period.

In 1945, independent States adhering to the United Nations Charter were fifty in number. Towards the end of 1961, this figure reached one hundred and four members. The fact that fifty-four States achieved their independence only sixteen years after the Second World War is not only of political bearing. The collapse of colonialism in its outdated form was accompanied by many social and cultural phenomena of great importance and deep significance. The fifty-four countries which acceded to the United Nations, enabled one thousand five hundred million human beings to enter contemporary History, and even to occupy in it a central place, instead of being left outside the movement of history by colonialist powers. Frantz Fanon, the famous thinker and militant (Ambassador of the Algerian FLN to Accra), in his study of the psychology of colonized man and his analysis of the mechanisms of the experiments made by emerging races, realizes the nationalist human content and the cultural message of such experiments. Following the publication of his book «Black Skins, White Masks» in 1952, and «The Damned of the Earth» in 1961, Frantz Fanon finally launched his famous «Under-developed countries, I challenge you!» According to the author, these countries are fighting causes centring around national combat against colonialism. Theirs is the struggle of under-development, rising against western civilization. Its objective is not simply to expel the foreign occupant, but is also a permanent struggle against everything that colonialism represents and against all the aspects of under-development. The experiment being made by these countries today exacts an objective, scientific analysis of the colonial phenomenon, an analysis going even beyond the phenomenon, in an attempt to

define the forces which inspire it and the main-springs of its action. An analysis of activating popular forces is equally necessary. The struggle for national liberation should be led in conjunction with the class-struggle. The watchword of independence should, for them, be linked with that of socialism. These experiments are not simply new experiences on account of their taking place at a particular moment of time; the causes defended and their accompanying circumstances give them an aspect of innovation.

These experiments must remain faithful to themselves. They must open out into other current experiments being made throughout the world, without losing sight of their own beginning which is a national fact —and without diverging from the scientific line which they have adopted. They must also avoid becoming prisoner to any previous experience whatsoever, which they might be tempted to imitate or take as an example, or depend blindly on any theory, whose principles might not be inspired by circumstances suitable for the country where they are to be applied. Otherwise, such experiments might well be based on empty formulae pronouncing genuine scientific terms but corresponding to nothing real.

The Arab experiment is one new experience, which from the very beginning found a suitable path, thanks to realistic, scientific analysis. The Arab experiment started with the theory, of Unity, Freedom and Socialism, considering these watchwords as deeply linked, and joined one to another, by dialectical bonds, making an indivisible whole. It is as a result of this theory that the movement of popular masses was able to express itself in a healthy and rational manner.

Fanon, and other thinkers who have studied these experiments, have demonstrated their specific cultural characters. By taking their place in history, the masses

of Africa and Asia have deeply understood the historic links between their past, their present and their future, and it is for this reason that their experiments are movements of national re-birth, founded on their socio-cultural heritage. These peoples link up with their own past, and at the same time try to adapt to the needs of the present time.

A well-known Arab thinker, Professor Michel 'Aflaq, had the merit of laying the ideological foundations of the Arab experiment. Furthermore, he laid down the general, intellectual framework in which all other new-born experiments should take place. By his insistence on the cultural aspect of popular mass-struggle in under-developed countries and on its importance in the general evolution of civilization, Mr. 'Aflaq has grasped the very essence of such experiments. He was probably the first thinker to define such progress on a practical and ideological level in under-developed countries.

The entry of one thousand five hundred million human beings into History was inevitably called upon to transform ideas and personal images of culture and to create new currents. One of its first consequences was the disappearance of the aristocratic idea of culture, which ceased to be the lot of an «élite» and became available to popular masses. In the past, culture was a luxury, an embellishment; today it serves its real social function. It is no longer an end in itself; neither is it cut off from the needs of society nor from its conditions, but is directly connected with the masses' aspirations. Neither is it something pre-fabricated and exportable, but rather a result of internal interaction and general movement of adaptation. It is the expression of a practical, intellectual attitude concerning civilization.

## *Technological Civilization*

Another category of thinkers call our current civilization «the technological civilization». Man today evolves more and more in an industrial context which stranges him from Nature. Technical applications and scientific discoveries have modified the notions on which Man based his thinking hitherto. Such notions were all related to his natural framework, the background of every intellectual step.

One and a half centuries ago, our planet entered the era of industrial revolutions, which began in England with the discovery of the steam-engine. Towards the end of the 19th Century a second industrial revolution took place, based on a group of technical discoveries such as the internal combustion-engine and electrical machines. We are now living in a third revolution as a result of atomic discoveries. One of this revolution's objectives is the automation of labour by electronic apparatus and other technical instruments. This technological framework has already invaded the cities and is gradually spreading outwards into the surrounding country. Culture drawing its inspiration from Nature inevitably suffered the imprint of this expansion and profound modifications, given the fact that the source from which it drew its nourishment was itself modified and that natural surroundings found themselves gradually replaced by techniques.

This transformation of the general framework of existence reflected on the economic situation of human society. Three economic sectors undergo evolution as a result of technical revolutions; —the administrative sector grows more rapidly than the industrial sector, which, in turn, evolves faster than that of agriculture.

Technical progress requires an adaptation of manpower, which must necessarily follow the rhythm of

evolution. It is indispensable for workers to enlarge their general culture and to perfect their specialized knowledge unceasingly. This is the reason why, today, in world economic congresses, requests are voiced for the stabilization of obligatory studies and the democratization of educational structures, with a view to developing all aptitudes and gifts, and so corresponding to economic requirements. The same voices demand the remodelling of educational programmes in which mathematics and pure and applied science will be given a more prominent place. The promotion of technical culture, well adapted to general evolution of the economic life of humanity, is now indispensable.

Modifications which have taken place in the three economic sectors have led certain writers to believe that a single general law rules economic evolution, whether taking place in capitalist or socialist countries. Differences in labels cannot efface the fact that technological revolution has the same characteristics, the same manifestations, with the same identical signs, wherever it takes place, and that we are today witnessing the entry of both capitalist and socialist society into what we may call the era of bureaucratic revolution.

Burnheim states that 12% of the citizens of the Soviet Union are directors of economic projects, engineers and technicians, and that they dispose of 50% of the U.S.S.R.'s national revenue; while 35% of the United States' national revenue goes into the pockets of only 10% of American citizens, also directors of economic projects.

Pierre Jacquard, analysing the phenomenon of the evolution of the three economic sectors, in his two works entitled «Education and the Policy of Functionalism» and «Sociology and Education», states that this new form of culture, exacted by the technical era and bureaucratic revolution, is a highly specialized one,

requiring vast general culture; this culture, in its turn takes on a different significance in the world of Technique, which is equally that of «productivity» and «output», and it is required, in turn, to become productive, to become a culture occupied with «output», based on experimentation and functional aspects.

### *The Anxiety Civilization*

There is yet another category of thinkers for whom ours is the «Civilization of Anxiety», a name conjured up by disintegration of political structures, transformations on a socio-economic level, following the Second World War, and the acceleration of history (making the known into a «changing world») have been anxiety factors which invade institutions, forms of thought and action. All contemporary ideologies are torn by violent and variegated crises which threaten them with dissolution, for they find themselves unable to adapt to the rhythm of change. The law of adaptability, necessitating a great capacity for assimilation and harmonization, no longer finds a field for application. The balance between the principles of this law has been lost. People struggle to assimilate changes, as and when they take place, but, before they succeed, situations are already found to have changed once more. For this reason, attempts at reformation and readjustment in every country in the world —and at every level and in every field of existence are found to be ineffective. If we are to respond to the explosive evolution of the present juncture, only deep revolution can have any impact.

The world we know is anguished, unbalanced, and under-developed, but it is at last becoming aware of the crisis which is destroying it —a crisis which is, however, neither temporary nor dependent on circumstance, and,

impossible to elude with ease. Man perceives that this is a permanent crisis, for History follows a cadence ever more rapid, ever more disconcerting. Institutions, created by the mind and the hand of man, are incapable of either slowing-down the cadence or of the continuously adapting to it. The crises reach to the very substance of people and things. It is not simply a phenomenon of civilization; rather, contemporary civilization is itself anxiety.

One of the most significant signs of the Civilization of Anxiety was indicated by Gaston Berger in his work «The Education of Modern Man», in which he speaks of the continuation, even of the aggravation, of the unbalance in the evolution of the modern world. In a world divided between rich nations and poor nations, we may say that it is this disequilibrium which is the cause of present under-development.

A famous Brazilian thinker, and the author of several works on the problem of world-hunger, J. Castro, began a conference in Geneva concerning this matter, by the words:

«It might appear ridiculous, at first sight, to speak of hunger before people who, and in a city which, has no knowledge of hunger. The evocation of this problem could, however, make sense if citizens of this city and all similar cities, could be made to realize that they live in a world where hunger is the basic element of the main contradiction existing in the world.»

He added:

«We often hear of the division of the world into advanced countries and under-developed countries. But what exactly is under-development, what are its criteria?»

According to him, the criteria of under-development, as defined by Alfred Sauvy, are no longer applicable to any country in the world today, which is in total

unbalance. Every nation in the world is affected by the crisis, whether they realize it or not, because the whole world is under-developed.

The division of the world into poor and rich nations demands that present culture be other than a simple realistic, scientific analysis of the present juncture and of the forces at work in the world. Culture is also called upon to impel the struggle for the transformation of the present juncture. Even if, to begin with, it is a struggle of a national character, it should expand its horizons to encompass the whole of humanity.

Unless it can ally itself with universal struggle for the freedom of Man in general, no national combat is in a position to face the present crisis.

No struggle in the name of liberty can withdraw from the struggle for improvement of living conditions—in other words, the struggle for socialism. Culture, in this world of anxiety, can only materialize through permanent struggle for the transformation of the image of the present world.

Today, the situation is as follows concerning national revenue per head in various continents and groups of countries:

<i>Continent</i> (or group of countries)	<i>Minimum</i> <i>Revenue (in \$)</i>	<i>Maximum</i> <i>Revenue (in \$)</i>
Africa	32	160
Asia and the Middle East	47	364
Latin America	63	667
Eastern Europe	92	716
Western Europe	202	1302
Oceania	1136	1202
North America	1533	2148



Through these figures, the depths of the abyss separating the world of riches and the world of poverty, can be perceived. Only twenty countries out of one hundred and ten, have an average national annual income of over five hundred dollars per head. In the ninety others, the average is inferior to five hundred dollars, and, among these ninety, sixty have an average income of under two hundred dollars per head<sup>1</sup>.

In a world so organized, culture can be none other than the culture of combat. People who are invested with true culture, do not isolate themselves from the crisis of the modern world; they remain in contact with under-developed countries fighting colonialism, countries where national combat and the class-struggle are one, in the fight for liberty and the establishment of Socialism.

### *Arab Culture*

We have seen, through this examination of the characteristics of current civilization, that culture is suffering from a crisis of adaptation today, though striving to reach as precise a picture as possible of the new world. It has not yet been able to assimilate all the transformations which have taken place and attain the sought-for equilibrium because, on the one hand, incessant mutations continue at an ever-increasing pace, and, on the other hand, conservative forces continue to operate. These latter hinder institutions, economic, political and socio-cultural systems in their attempts to adapt to new conditions in the modern world. The crisis is a general one and dislocates cultures more attracted to the past than to the future, more drawn to the natural

1. These figures concerning national revenue are estimations for the year 1960 (cf. the doctorate thesis of the author).

than to an industrialized state (in its wider sense), those which tend towards an «élite», those which seek luxury as opposed to militancy, and those which seek to justify existing conditions instead of trying to change them. All of these cultures, leaning more towards spontaneity than to planification, the static rather than to the dynamic, building on what exists rather than on necessity, on pictures more than on figures, on reading rather than writing, on experience rather than practice —all these find themselves threatened.

What then is the place of Arab culture in the present crisis?

The question is not whether Arab culture exists or does not exist at the present time, nor is it our purpose to examine its content —whether it is already formed or only in the process of formation. We wish to insist, as we come to the end of our analysis, on the fact that the crisis of Arab culture in the present world must necessarily be approached in the light of the general crisis destroying all other cultures. The Arab Nation, in its resurgent movement, requires a theoretical guide to direct its revolutionary action. There appears to us no other way to approach the problems of Arab culture, which would lose its main «raison d'être» if, at this historic moment in the Nation's life, and in the present juncture of events, it did not become a guide, bestowing on the Arab experiment a civilizing content. In making this statement, we insist on the need to refuse all traditional formulae used to situate cultural problems; —«involved culture», or «non-involved culture», etc., for, as far as we are concerned, culture is something living, which cannot tolerate any prefabricated coercive formulae.

Incontestably, Arab culture is going through a severe crisis. It is growing like a «weed», on the edge of the

Nation's life, isolated from world evolution. The causes of this condition are variegated:

1. It is a culture which is, to a great extent a prisoner of the past, content to imitate the ancient Arab heritage in too conformist a manner. It reproduces forms and patterns which served to express a reality no longer existing. Such conformity prevents real creativity and innovation. Even more, it prevents a culture from conjuring up a true idea of the Nation's past. Instead of trying to re-interpret the past in terms of the present, we content ourselves with the contradictory pictures and divergent interpretations which have accumulated around our past, with a certain apathy and a marked lack of courage.

2. At the other end of the spectrum, men of Arab culture pay little attention to this far-distant past, and seek new material and a new field of action for Arab culture. For this, they turn towards modern cultures. Such intellectuals only recognize and hold on to acquired results, without attempting to link cause and effect, the tree and its fruit. In this respect, they are scarcely different from those in adoration of the past. Their approach is the same in that they yield to imitation, apathy and the line of least resistance.

3. The Arab mind, in the accomplishment of its present historic task, stumbles against considerable cultural retardment. For this reason, Arab culture has, hitherto, never revealed itself in the form of ideological currents capable of mobilizing the masses. Only individual attempts have prevailed and they have demonstrated that a certain degree of obscurity is entertained by the Arab mind concerning ambient reality.

4. To a certain extent, the Nation's past is still enveloped in mystery. Much still remains to be clarified. Various interpretations have accumulated and make the past opaque. In the same way, Arab intellectuals still

have difficulty in reaching a true picture of reality in the present world, for they do not experience the world globally and completely.

5. The very concept of culture has not yet been clearly defined in our homeland. Its culture is a verbal one; the accumulation of knowledge, adaptation, plagiarism, and translation continue to dominate, stifling any real culture, fruit of an Arab intellectual effort aiming at the definition of our links between the Nation's past, its present and its future. Such a step forward would express a particular intellectual attitude as far as current values, those of the past and those to come, are concerned. In fact, culture is both a theoretical and practical attitude in relation to society, to life, to the concept of Right, Justice and Freedom, and also in relation to all values capable of evolution. It is for this reason that Arab culture must comprehend the links between the past, the present and the future of humanity, as well as these of the Nation. It must be able to express the Arab intellectual's attitude concerning the links between national reality and notions of world civilization today.

6. Over and above all this, Arab culture of the present is isolated from the political and socio-economic framework in which it evolves. At the best of times, it is content with describing reality—in part only. It has not yet reached the stage of scientific, objective analysis of reality in all its aspects—the stage where the picture of reality can be re-fashioned, reinforced by an exhaustive view of past and present, and previsions for the future and by the reality of human society today and the currents to which it is subjected.

7. Finally, Arab culture does not possess a programme enabling it to draw up a cultural strategy and policy and to define the role to be played by the Arab mentality at this historic stage.

These «weeds» growing on the edge of Arab national life and humanity's general evolution, can never grow into flowers unless the wilderness becomes a garden. And only deep militant, revolutionary action can bring this to pass.. together with interaction between the life of our intellectuals and that of our Nation, which is suffering and fragmented, and against which all the forces of evil are plotting. Colonialism and international Zionism are trying to sever our Nation from its past, to stifle its vitality and prevent it from reaching its goal. They are also trying to keep the toiling masses in their present condition, delivered up to class-exploitation and almost entirely prevented from contributing to the Nation's edification. They are placing our Nation's destiny in the hand of puppets and marionettes whose strings are pulled from abroad, manipulated in the framework of a clearly-defined strategy —that of neo- and old-fashioned colonialism.

Arab culture will never have a real content —a content conferring on it true freedom of the city— unless intellectuals take up a merciless struggle to transform reality in a deep and decisive manner. And Arab intellectuals can only accomplish this task if they accept the idea of reading little, and, on the contrary, writing much.

Arab culture in the world of today can only be edified progressively, through a struggle led by Arab thinkers, expressing the will of the Nation's masses, this Nation which each day faces colonialism, Zionism and class exploitation. It must not be a culture based on book-learning alone, but rather the fruit of daily combat, the result of intellectual effort and of an attempt to find a solution to problems created by struggle and to bestow on revolutionary socialist action —whose objective is the re-birth of the Nation— an adequate theoretical guide.

A Speech made in Damascus in 1965.



## Chapter XVII

# What is Revolution?

We have chosen this title for a very simple reason, because no word in our time has been so improperly used as the word «revolution». No word has been so much misused. In fact, improper usage and distortion are more often attributable to those who claim to belong to the revolution and to be fighting for it, than to those who are its open adversaries. In spite of our growing national awareness, in spite of the tribulations we have had to bear since the loss of Palestine and the province of Alexandrette, we Arabs are still far from being able to assess the dangers which threaten us, far from a real sense of the responsibilities we have to assume; in a word, we are still far from entering a true revolutionary phase. We still count on appearances to veil the truth. What is said does not always correspond to what is meant, and, in every field of existence, we cohabit with numerous and intolerable contradictions.

Having no objective, stable criterium to help us judge events and institutions rationally, in our wild enthusiasm, we borrow the word «heroism» to designate actions undertaken by clever, unscrupulous adventurers; any negative, anarchical action is for us a revolution,

even if it is the obvious result of an ephemeral, thoughtless moment of enthusiasm. Any sudden, superficial change, all large-scale sabotage-actions are equally «revolutions»... to such a point that real revolutionaries, anxious and fearful of misunderstandings, now hesitate to use the word «revolution».

The real and the unreal have become intertwined and the real can no longer be recognized. Forgers have perfected their «technics» to such a point that it has become impossible to tell a counterfeit note from a genuine one. In an attempt to clarify matters, as far as possible, we shall try to reply to the following questions:

1. What exactly does revolution mean?
2. How can our young people's lives become revolutionary?
3. How can we bring to realization revolution in the lands of our great Arab homeland and so transform the life of our Nation?

### *1. What Revolution means*

If we were to give a brief definition of revolution, we should say that it is a process of radical and decisive transformation, as a result of which a given society can pass from one socio-political system to another of a completely different nature, and of a higher quality than the first.

To accomplish such a process, three things are necessary:

A. A social reality in a state of degradation, an unbalanced situation in which contradictions and defects accumulate, to the point where they prove that the situation is being maintained artificially and cannot indefinitely continue. Authorities in power, having failed



to redress the situation, their interests are found to be in contradiction with the revolutionary transformations which have become inevitable.

B. Revolutionary elements charged with the task of accomplishing revolutionary transformations and responsible for the establishment of the new system desired. Their action must obviously take place within the frame-work of a revolutionary organization supported by the toiling masses.

C. Clear ideology, a well-established scale of values, stable ideals and objectives. The totality must be capable of guiding the steps of revolutionaries and prefiguring the new society to which they aspire —a totally different one from that in which they live. The future becomes the supreme objective and for revolutionaries, their main pre-occupation, taking precedence over the past and the present, if ideals are to be maintained. Revolutionaries' ideology and scale of values must reflect the needs and interests of the majority of the sons of the nation, in whose name they militate.

This classification of three indispensable elements for achieving revolution is for us a simple method of clarifying matters; but this in no way means that we consider such elements as a mechanical assemblage of autonomous parts, completely independent one from another. Revolution, as we have already stated, is the accomplishment of an act and, therefore, a combination of ideas and material facts, of theory and action. Hand, heart and mind act in unison and equilibrium, with no place for dichotomy.

Starting with these three basic constituents and keeping them always freshly in mind, we can now disengage several characteristics and fundamental aspects of revolutions in general. The first element presupposes the existence of crisis, and a dis-balance of a

socio-economic and political situation. One sort of sickness or another undermining national life, can be the cause of degradation of a social reality. Such a sickness can be foreign domination or occupation, or political fragmentation or economic or cultural under-development, social disparity, internal division, moral decadence or any number of things... But it can also be an ill of a general nature and can attack every domain of national life, in which case it necessitates a complete revision of the foundations of society. This is precisely the situation of the Arab Nation, and, for us, the reason why partial reforms would be useless and without impact. The only remedy is to arouse a general movement of re-birth.

With regard to the first constituent of our classification, and the various forms it can take, we shall end by stating that revolutions can be of several various types. They can be national revolutions of a purely political nature, of economic character such as industrial and social revolutions or deep intellectual revolutions, which shake the very foundations of thought and knowledge, such as the great scientific revolutions. But revolution can also be *total* and encompass all these partial revolutions at one and the same time. In this case, it takes place in stages, according to clearly defined strategy. Ours, the Arab Revolution, is destined to be one of these.

In any given socio-political situation, contradictions are a sign of profound disbalance and call for change at short or long-term. Crises are, therefore, one of the elements contributing to the creation of a pre-revolutionary climate. It does not, however, suffice for contradictions to exist for revolution to break out. «Determinists» believe that revolutions are the ineluctable results of certain factors, certain objective, historic circumstances which are, to some extent, independent of the will of individuals and social groups. We believe, on the other

hand, that the simple fact of the use of the word «contradictions» is the sign of an awakening, the indication that revolutionaries exist —they who represent the second indispensable element for the advent of revolution. There is, therefore, dialectical unity between the objective and the subjective.

The expression «uprising against a given social reality» requires explanation. It is the concept of reality which can give rise to some confusion. Human life differs in its reality, from elemental life and natural phenomenon. Transformations in Nature take place at a very slow rhythm, though revolutions in this domain are not completely absent; earthquakes, the violence and fury of the ocean, and all other similar calamities, represent the «dynamic» aspect of Nature. In human life, on the other hand, changes and mutations are the rule, while immobility, a static state, conservatism and apathy represent an exceptional state. Anything which constitutes a hindrance to evolution in any given human society ends up by suffocating all social activity and preventing progress and development. Human existence then becomes a sort of «swamp» where everything sinks; only revolution can give it back its authenticity by re-situating it in the general current of evolution. However, any revolution depends on the will of the men who rise up against a provisional situation, depending on outside circumstances, which can sometimes, with the passing of time, take on an appearance of eternity and delude observers as to its inherent ephemeral character. An illusion of this sort can last until the moment when revolutionaries, capable of going to the bottom of things, come to announce change.

The second element in our classification —revolutionaries— must in no way be looked upon as simply an instrument capable of being manipulated like a piece of machinery. Human beings are endowed with feelings

such as faith in the future and the desire to modify the conditions in which they live, and with virtues enabling them to carry out the revolutionary process.

We believe that revolution is prepared in the very inner being of individuals at the same time that it becomes imminent as a result of the disequilibrium of social structures. Every revolution is a creative process and in no way the result of given circumstances and objective factors, forming the material of the process of transformation and innovation. In every revolutionary process, just as many creative faculties are set in motion as in any other artistic creation. One invests in it just as much of heart and mind and essential being. In revolution, the subjective factor is the capacity of the intellect to analyse social conditions and to grasp fundamental contradictions. It is, equally, sensitivity and an awakening to reality.

In the first place, therefore, revolution is a process taking place *inside*, beginning with the awakening of individuals in the face of the reality surrounding them. It first finds expression in their minds, in their will and in their being.

The third element indispensable to the start of a revolution is *revolutionary ideology*, or, as we have already defined it previously, a group of ideas tracing out a clear social and political orientation to guide the steps of revolutionaries and inspire their plans for action and their activities. The existence of a revolutionary, or of a revolutionary group of certain size, is not enough. Strong ideological bonds have to be established and a stable rule of conduct must harmonize each step. Only if these conditions are fulfilled can revolution be accomplished, whether carried out by a single social class or by a whole nation. The ideology of revolutionaries needs to be the expression of the interests of a particular social class and also of the nation in its entirety.

Revolution requires ideological preparation and a basis common to all militants made up of ideas, feelings and qualities, shared by all at the heart of the resurgent movement. These are the conditions in which it can transform reality and change the existing socio-political system for another of a higher quality. As for revolutionary ideology, it must necessarily depend on popular masses who, if properly organized, constitute an inexhaustible source of strength for the revolutionary movement.

If they remain in close contact with their ideology, (even while, at the same time, leading combat ), and never tire of going deeper into it, if they are faithful to it, revolutionaries can create a whole new generation of revolutionaries, of a different order to those who have preceded them, capable of more far-reaching pledges, awareness and revolutionary conduct. It is for all of these reasons that we can say that revolution is a whole way of life, an education and not just an event like any other. It is a renewal of existence on a group-level; it is a re-birth for the individual, for social classes and the nation as a whole. In our Arab homeland, morality has suffered as gravely as the revolution. Instead of being revolutionary morality, expressing progressive values and ideals, better to serve the interest of the Nation and under-privileged classes, instead of being based on intellectual probity, impartiality and independence of will, it is in fact in submission to traditions and customs inherited from the past. It gives rise to negative, uncertain attitudes in which fear of change predominates. It gives rise to fear even of the word «*revolution*».

If we separate morality and revolution, we cannot avoid destroying both at once. Morality would be emptied of its vibrant, living substance and the revolution of its human significance. If revolutionary values were lost, and morality degraded, militants would in no time

become «merchants of revolution». If militants allow themselves to be corrupted by vanity and presumptuousness, if they become individualistic and preoccupied by their own interests, if they are cut off from their people and only maintain with them the kind of relationship existing between actors and spectators in a theatre, all chance will be lost of ever seeing the revolution accomplished. To be genuine, revolution must have a truly human significance.

Revolutionaries must take part in defending the interests of under-privileged classes and work towards the realization of national aspirations. The criterium of the difference between a true revolutionary and a false one lies in the quality of his involvement. If you encounter someone ready to lavish tireless activity to attain a particular ideal, someone who is always optimistic and full of intellectual curiosity, who never hushes his efforts and gives always of himself, who refuses superficiality both in intellectual judgements and practical attitudes; if you are sure that he is moved by deep human feelings, you can say, without being likely to make a mistake, that you are in the presence of a true, even an exemplary revolutionary. In the same way, vindicators of morality may find themselves in the position of being unable to put into practice the principles they uphold, and simply becoming parrots reciting lessons they have learned, as long as their concept of morality is not sustained by revolutionary spirit and is, in fact, devoid of any social content. The spirit of revolution requires morality to be in close, deep correlation with the living framework in which it is to be applied, i.e: the society in question. When, in any given society, corruption reaches such a state of gravity that the only remaining remedy is the out-break of revolution, defenders of morality can be sure of one thing only; revolution is the only durable means of safe-guarding morality.

They should also realize that revolution has to take place, firstly at the level of thought, soul-life and social conduct. It is the only way for moral precepts to be raised to the level necessary for the historic phase through which the Nation is passing. Any morality which is not revolutionary is likely to become a hollow crist, condemned to decay, severed from the living tree, a mere collection of sounds, without impact or real meaning.

Humanity has grown beyond the phase of revolutionary infancy which hindered its real progress. It has now entered its phase of maturity. In the past, revolutions were simply reactions against well-defined pressures or up-risings against repression. They have now gone beyond this stage, and they aim at cleansing and the establishment of a new socio-political system, corresponding to the requirements of the human community in question. Improvisation, sudden spurts, short-lived explosions; weakness or absence of organization, the pre-eminence of sentiment over rationalism, and personal attachments over group solidarity, the cult of personality and blind devotion to leaders, are all characteristics of revolutionary immaturity, and are contrary to the spirit and the ambitions of revolution of our time.

In the past, the driving-force behind revolutions was more of less retrograde tendencies and social currents—tribalism, the clan-spirit, ethnical or religious solidarity... Today, however, such driving-force is aroused by a wider and more evolved «esprit de corps». It is the feeling of solidarity binding together members of a new generation, growing within the current of revolution itself. It is revolution which gives to members of this generation inspiration for thought and action. We are not, therefore, concerned with a pre-existent form of «esprit de corps», but a spirit which grows in revolutionaries parallel to action. It remodels militants, creating people with new gifts and aptitudes, new feelings, working to

defend new values. To a certain extent, the militant also becomes the kernel of the society of his aspirations. He can dominate present reality and its contradictions and become from then onwards a citizen of the future society for which he is militating. He ceases to feel enchained by present society in its state of decay, which he is attempting to transform. Unless revolution is conducted by a whole generation of militants, united in theory and in action, nothing stable can be edified; we shall only build on sand. Revolution is not a collection of slogans to be brandished ostentatiously at every opportunity; it is a new society which gradually comes into being with the rising of a generation of revolutionaries. Unless they are truly mobilized, revolution can only be an attempt destined to failure. If the cardinal element for guaranteeing success and providing a sound orientation is lacking, revolution will remain within the confines we have described as revolutionary infancy.

Revolution, in its new aspect, cannot take place unless there is a revolutionary theory to guide the foot steps of militants, to give them inspiration and direction. Only such a theory is capable of endowing them with the means to understand and analyse profitably the reality around them. It is this theory which gives them their true identity, gives to their cause consistency and a definition of their historic role in society.

It is equally vain to speak of revolution if militants as a whole are not firmly attached to the revolutionary virtues and qualities which distinguish them from preceding generations. They must be united in thought and action and go beyond the unbalanced situation of society and stretch out towards the values of revolutionary society.

Finally, no revolution in the true and renewed sense, can take place unless all manifestations of revolutionary immaturity are banished; in other words, unless stable,



objective criteria are defined to establish true revolutionary links between militants as a whole. Militants must reject all manner of out-moded relationships built around personal interests and go beyond sentimentality. This high level of revolutionary morality can only be attained if militants are careful to ensure that their relationship with their organization is sincere and genuine and free from defects of previous periods. Militants must divest themselves of anything liable to extinguish the flame of revolution, of all that might hinder or retard revolution.

## *2. How could such a revolution alter the lives of our people?*

Arab Revolution must necessarily be a total revolution and must alter every aspect of our lives. Being of a national, socialist character, its objective cannot be other than the liberation of Man and the abolition of anything liable to prevent his expansion. The participation of every citizen in power of decision must be considered as the very basis of all new democratic life.

These indispensable characteristics of the Arab Revolution define in themselves the social forces called to operate towards necessary transformation. Such forces are obviously made up of workers, peasants, students and revolutionary intellectuals. None of these classes and social categories is capable of assuming alone the tasks of the Arab Revolution, so they must fight together, in unity and solidarity, at the heart of the same revolutionary movement. Students and intellectuals are the «brains» of the movement, workers and peasants are its productive force and soldiers the blood which flows in its veins and the timber which feeds the flame. Revolution can never take place fully in our Arab homeland unless

all these classes and social categories are fully mobilized. All intellectuals, students, workers, soldiers and peasants who fail to answer the call of the Revolution will have to answer to History for their delay; great will be their responsibility, for they constitute, in their lethargy, an impediment to the march of revolution and retard its advent.

It is worth remembering, however, that quantity is not our main pre-occupation. It is quality which must, for us, take the first place, for we desire that our Revolution shall be an example for all humanity. Swelling the ranks of militants is not our main task, which is rather the most efficient possible defense of the working-classes and those of our proletarian Arab Nation—using the militants at our disposal—and our response to the aspirations of Humanity in general.

In order that the revolutionary movement may attain its objectives, and at the same time remain invulnerable, militants belonging to it must hold firm to the ideology out of which it grows and to the moral values of revolution. Every militant knows that counter-revolutionary forces are not always external, such as colonialism and reaction. They are just as often to be encountered within revolutionary movements. Lack of revolutionary culture and awareness, the absence of discipline, vanity, opportunism and individualism are evils which assail the very body of revolution and do it the gravest harm. They can even reach its heart, deviate its intensity and destroy it utterly.

Finally, we shall attempt to answer a third question:

### *3. How can we bring into effect a revolution in its true sense in our Arab homeland?*

Arab society is under-developed. Its structures are out-dated and unable to adapt to the needs of modern

times. The numbers of the illiterate and the mortality rate are very high. National revenue is low. Inequality in the distribution of wealth is flagrant. Political division is a perpetual menace. Many other phenomena indicate the grave state of deterioration and under-development from which our society suffers. Those who hope to undertake the transformation of this state of things encounter a multitude of difficulties, —resistance, the power of inertia preventing evolution; retrograde attitudes, congealed concepts of people and things, and institutions where conservative and counter-revolutionary forces are strongly implanted. Arab man of today lives in veritable atrophy. Arab revolutionaries are trying to improve the situation, to transform the swamp into a luxuriant plantation, by purifying the water and perfecting the system of irrigation. The swamp will then cease to be a cess-pool of microbes and malady, and become a fertile land, showering riches on its inhabitants and those surrounding it. If Arab revolutionaries' efforts are crowned with success, we shall re-live the times when our ancestors headed the Nations of the World and led Humanity by leaps and bounds along the road to progress. Revolutionaries are striving to bring to pass popular aspirations. They know only too well that permanent struggle, planification, respect for scientific principles, the organization of popular masses on firm ideological bases, are the only effective means to attain the revolution's objectives. They are also fully aware that many hostile forces watch their every step and use all means at their disposal to prevent the accomplishment of their historic mission. For revolution, to reach its plenitude and become authentic, all institutions, all political, economic and socio-cultural structures, out-moded by time and become a hindrance to progress, must be attacked. Revolution must abolish the social domination of reactionary classes and conquer dis-

union in the Arab homeland, colonialism and Zionism.

It is our duty to unify the Arab Nation from the Gulf to the Ocean. Numerous powers fall upon us with intent to prevent this unification, which is the primary objective of the Arab Revolution. But the artificial frontiers which divide us, the obstacles rising between sons of the same Nation, the disparity of forces and the atomization of effort, complicate our task to an unbelievable extent.

It is equally our duty to establish socialism. Socialist relationships will give to the majority of our Nation's sons the possibility of becoming the true defenders, the guides and the guardians of Arab unity when it comes to pass. Socialism will enable us to abolish class-exploitation. There again, however, we encounter obstacles liable to thwart us. Privileged classes, ever avid and insatiable, do their best to undermine every step towards socialism in defence of their own interests.

Internal and external forces conspiring against Arab unity, which strive with every means at their disposal to retard its realization, to empty it of all meaning and to mislead public opinion with regard to it, wish, above all, to create a confused situation in which any form of sound, healthy unity becomes impossible.

One of the manoeuvres of these hostile forces consists in trying to create a form of unity to safeguard and serve the interests of counter-revolutionaries. When they perceive that such a manoeuvre is a failure, our enemies attack revolutionaries directly, trying to sow discord in their ranks and to create artificial contradictions, opposing them to each other. Our enemies hope in this way to establish disunion as an irrefutable state of affairs, in reality and in peoples' minds.

These same hostile forces try to combat the socialist option of the Arab Revolution, utilizing for this various means, the most simple of which is the creation of obstacles to prevent the success of measures and reali-

zations of socialist character. They foster division at the heart of the socialist movement itself.

It is, therefore, the duty of revolutionary forces to take stock of the fact that hostile plans are being prepared against them, to do their best to counter them and to remain united. Otherwise, sabotage would be successful and the revolutionary movement would voluntarily open its flank to the enemy, supply him with arms, inform him of true positions occupied, and indicate its own weak-points. This could not fail to happen if the revolutionary movement got out of control and slipped into a «petit-bourgeois» state of mind, and allowed itself to be manipulated by middle-class interests.

Arab unity and socialism can only reach full realization and become strong and invulnerable, if established on revolutionary foundations at the end of long-term revolutionary activity, based on scientific principles. Militant action must take place within the strictest framework, based on an objective analysis of reality. We must planify meticulously for all transformations to be made in the direction of unity and socialism. The final objective must never be lost from view —to awaken a general re-birth of the Arab Nation, to abolish everything which prevents the Nation from expressing its true identity and to exploit profitably the entire potential available.

We must count on popular masses, in the first place, on revolutionary forces and, above all, on the working-class. Those who refuse to recognize the fact of the conspiracy hatched against the Arab Revolution by the international forces of colonialism and Zionism (these forces which desire to sow discord among the ranks of revolutionaries and to enclose us in the trap of revolutionary immaturity and divert our forward-march), those who refuse close examination of ideas concerning the current phase of the Arab Revolution, who content

themselves with using ostentations slogans, throwing dust in our eyes, and prevent the masses from seeing the true path to be followed by the Revolution, those who think that talking about revolution dispenses them from action —all these people are a long way from understanding the essence of revolution and will always be incapable of contributing to it. They can be neither real revolutionaries in behaviour nor in thought; neither can they help to realize it within the Arab homeland.

1964

## Chapter XVIII

# Our View of Arab History

Those who draw an artificial line between theory and practice, between thought and action, have a superficial view of our history and make it abstract and devoid of substance. When they look at Arab history, they remove it from the spatial and temporal context of its beginnings, so emptying it of its content and its human compass. They make abstraction of the «*élan vital*» through which the Arabs have expressed their strength of character and sense of honour and which, in its eternal newness, constitutes an inexhaustible source of heroic acts, perpetuating the historic message offered by the Arab Nation to Humanity.

Only those who, on the contrary, make no division between thought and action, who are convinced that what a man does during his life is his most valuable possession and that the accomplishment of the most insignificant task has more impact than an idea of the greatest brilliance or force, but which never takes on form and remains, therefore, lifeless, understand that the Ba'th's view of Arab history and the practical stand which we adopt concerning it, are one and the same thing.

We propose to make a study of this deliberate stand, which is full of vitality and expresses a deep sense of responsibility, and is, at the same time, our method of approaching our national problems as a whole.

History, as we understand it, is not a scholarly study of what our ancestors have bequeathed to us, nor is it an attempt to explain and justify past events. Neither is it a card-index of information and references. For us, it is a deep analysis of the links between the past, the present and the Nation's eventual future.

How, then, do we look on our past, our present and our future? Is our attitude to deny the past, to lament the present and to await the future? Or is it to bring the past to life, to transform the present from top to bottom and to re-fashion our future actively, with our own hands?

### *The past and ourselves*

Arab reactionaries have a congealed attitude and a paralysing outlook on our history. Viewing it statically and without its evolutionary content, they strip our past of vitality and all creative significance. In this optic, our past is, practically-speaking, a burden, a handicap preventing evolution, a dark prison and a tomb in which to bury ourselves.

Internationalists (Stalinists) and anti-Arabs («chou'oubiyyoun»)\* have equally a deformed, abstract view of our history, devoid of all vitality. They try to sever us from our past. They deny their history, are totally detached from it, and consider nationalism as a funda-

\* From «chou-oubiyya», designating a movement created by non-Arab Moslems to counter the predominance of Arabs within the Empire. (Editor's note).



mental and irremediably reactionary tendency, opposed to progressive thought.

In this way, reactionaries sacrifice the present and the future and enclose themselves in the past, which is their refuge and their prison. Stalinist internationalists and anti-Arabs look on the past as an evil, to be got rid of at all costs. Both propagate a disfigured view of our history and threaten our national identity with annihilation.

What is our own attitude, we who believe in our Nation as much as we believe in our own existence and who maintain indefectible links with the past?

*The past* can become a burden for the individual and for society; it can hinder their development and slow down their progress on the road of evolution. On the other hand, it can also be a source of strength and ardour and an impulsion to action. If we adopt the attitude of reactionaries, we allow our history to dominate and paralyse us and we become, to all extent, its slaves. With a different attitude, our past can easily become for us a spring-board; we become master of our projects and plans, able to transform our present and remodel the future freely.

### *The Reactionary Attitude*

For reactionaries, the past is everything, the beginning and the end. For us, on the other hand, the past is the point from which we start, and the future is its finality. Reactionaries only see in the present and the future what their view of the past allows them to perceive. We only retain from the past what can help us to understand with greater clarity our present situation and prepare our future.

Reactionaries seek facility and the least possible

effort, an attitude befitting the listless and those who live by exploiting others. Our attitude is bolder, requires more effort and forces us into unmitigated struggle. When our concept of the future and the face we wish to give to society is discussed, reactionaries reply that all has already been defined in the past, that the image of society has already been delineated by our ancestors and that we only have to look backwards to find all the necessary elements at our disposal. For them, it is the past which is the ideal, not the future. For them, society is closed in on itself; therein, the only activity, the only pre-occupation is the complacent evocation of days gone-by.

For us, the primary task is to work for the future. This is our ideal, and present experience is seen as a prolongation of the past. The Arab Nation has not yet exhausted its possibilities. The rich potential at its disposal can be for it an inexhaustible source of grandiose realizations and heroic acts.

We seek an open society, in a permanent state of renewal. We only retain from the past the heroic attitudes of our fore-fathers, for these alone can impel us to innovation and creation.

This introduction, in which we have demonstrated some aspects distinguishing our attitude towards the past from that of Arab reactionaries, will enable us to go further and define the main differences between our analysis of history and past events, and that advanced by reactionaries.

Whether the question under discussion is Arab history or any other matter, reactionary attitude is always the same, based on prejudice and on preconceived ideas, unrelated to experience. Their version of past events is, as a result, devoid of any *scientific approach*. Their research has no logical basis and they are closed to all discussion. Their only logic is «justification».

They juggle with words to justify and to manifest vengeance, never to make objective, lucid analyses. Rigidity and narrow-mindedness of this type close their horizons and lead them to fanaticism. Reactionaries are deeply attached to form rather than to the essence of things. The real significance of events escapes them and their vision becomes obscured.

Equally, reactionaries give to the past a mystical, almost a magical interpretation. They magnify their ancestors in an exaggerated fashion; for them, their fore-fathers reached perfection and, for them, their conduct is the supreme ideal. They only retain from the past the positive and the magnificent, and obstinately refuse to look at negative aspects and at mistakes. Without a trace of critical spirit, they accept the past as a whole, giving approval to defects, grave errors of judgement and catastrophies which have left their mark. They condemn everything in the present which does not correspond to what their fore-fathers did or would have wished. They refuse any concept of the future which do not respect all the modalities and all the details of life in the past. They accord a «sempiternal» character to past solutions in the resolution of present problems, for the solutions of the past are considered valid for all time and everywhere. We might almost think they want to suffocate us, their descendants, with ideas that once saved the Arabs of the past.

This is the irrational, anti-scientific way in which reactionaries approach our history. Not content with this paralyzing vision of things, they go even further and deny Arabism. They join up with anti-Arabs who make a dichotomy between Moslem and Arab history and claim that *the Arab cause is in contradiction with religious ideology and with the spirit of Islam.*

They have no living idea of the past; they are attached to appearances only and fascinated by the

withered bark from which sap and substance have been withdrawn. Their anti-scientific attitude, their theological almost mystical view of Arab history, proves irrefutably that reactionaries are totally absorbed and smothered in general decadence and that they are incapable of invention. They lack confidence in themselves, and their cataracts prevent them from perceiving the rich present and future potential of the Arab Nation.

This has brought them to a loss of identity, to blind submission to traditions and to accomplished facts, and to an easy-going religiosity, tainted with mysticism and superstition. Their religiosity is often hypocritical, opportunist and self-interested; in other cases, it is a sign of ignorance and apathetic submission to customs inherited from obscurantist eras. It is in such a climate, contrary to the development of human beings, that reactionaries live in our homeland. They are weighted down by formalism and their irrational attachment to the past and to its schemas, devoid of life and consistency.

Blinded by their own fanaticism, they tend to stifle those who do not share their points of view and who contest their attitude.

On the contrary, our own analysis of the past — of our national past — is based on thorough scientific logic, sustained by a high level of awareness and faith in our Nation. We are not obsessed by the past to the point of losing our critical faculty, and our admiration is neither passive nor sanctimonious. We refuse to camouflage errors and defects by ostentatiously defending qualities of the past, and by producing justifications, often forced, for negative elements. We try to appreciate our history at its true value, weighing scrupulously its qualities and defects. Our attachment is lucid and devoid of subjectivism. Our history's positive features are for us a source of pride; its negative features are experiences from which

we can draw lessons, liable to light our future path. We are fully aware that the patrimony our ancestors have bequeathed us is the fruit of effort and the intense struggles they made with courage and perseverance. For them nothing was gratuitous. There existed a whole series of innovating, creative acts by which Arabs asserted their particular genius and their identity. Those who try to deviate our Nation from the general evolutionary current of human civilization and prevent us from taking flight, by placing a heavy curtain between us and our future and using the past as a hindrance, are incapable of imagining the climate in which the pioneers of Arab civilization —the conquerors, the scholars, the poets and illustrious philosophers among our ancestors—truly lived. They are incapable of understanding this experience, unique of its kind, made by our ancestors, which enabled them to renovate and enrich their own lives and that of society. Otherwise, reactionaries would not be an obstacle to resurgence and to the prolongation of this experience in the present.

Our ancestors conquered themselves before launching out on the conquest of the world. They renovated their own lives before they spread abroad the movement of renewal. They stretched out to the future and refused to be prisoners of the present or of the past. It is in this way that they were able to leave an indelible mark on human history. Our history's heroes were progressive combatants and they balanced their lives with their aspirations. They conquered countries governed by States with out-moded institutions, incapable of evolution, holding together miraculously. Triumphant over these moribund States, the Arabs established a new system of government never before encountered. The civilizations of these conquered countries represented the summit of human intelligence of the time. The Arabs, assimilated these civilizations, instead of disdaining or rejecting them

thereby showing admirable breadth of mind, and were able to make the most of all their acquisitions. They were able in this way to create an Arab culture of infinitely greater quality than that of the conquered civilizations, which became a beacon lighting the way for humanity.

*What is the role of reactionaries in relation to our history?*

When, today, Arabs ask questions such as; «What do we want?» or «How can we succeed in getting what we want?», they must bear in mind the living, progressive, creative attitude of our ancestors. Our criteria and landmarks must be in close relation to the acquisitions of human civilization today; but we must think in terms of the ways and means by which humanity can progress in future. In their long march towards progress, the nations of the world form a single column. There was a time when the Arabs were at the head, the leaders of this column. Today, our first concern must be our reintegration into the current of History. We have lingered too long on the side-lines. We must understand and assimilate modern civilization, in order that we may one day surpass it and continue to bear our glorious message to humanity.

Modern civilization has perhaps disadvantages. Our task is to purify it of the evils it transports, for it would be absurd if, under the pretext of wishing to avoid these evils, we rejected or disdained this civilization and its acquisitions bodily. If we examine our own civilization in the light of the 20th Century, we realize that, in spite of its brilliant qualities, it is, in the last analysis, artless and naïve, and, above all, incapable of adapting to the realities of modern civilization.

*Politically*, power in the past was despotic and autocratic. Its weight and its pressure upon citizens could only be attenuated by means of the religious factor, which played a moderating role, when the Caliph was, by good fortune, a godly man.

*Economically*, production was low and natural resources were not exploited in a rational, systematic manner. The distribution of wealth was scandalously unequal.

*Socially*, feudalism was all-powerful, and the tribal system predominated, propagating above all a retrograde view of woman's role in society.

*Intellectually*, idealism and subjection reigned. The mystics' renunciation to material things and to the «ephemeral» world spread freely and hindered development. No real importance was accorded to experimentation, practice and formation.

Arab civilization has made an important step in the evolution of human civilization; but this step has been surpassed by others, and it is for us to overstep them all and join again the column of highly-developed nations of the 20th Century. The Arab Nation is called upon, in the struggle in which it is now involved, not only to free itself and to surmount the crises which are destroying it, but also to make a contribution to the freeing of all humanity.

In order that our national edifice may become strong, efficient and able to get into tune with all the currents of modern evolution, we must appropriate to ourselves all that is best in modern civilization and find our inspiration, without complex, in other nation's experiments.

By stubbornly repeating their refrain about the past and using it as a magic wand, reactionaries, in fact, only seek to dissimulate their condemnable actions, squandering our highest values, exploiting the ignorance of the

people and the lack of vigilance of public opinion, in order to combat all progressive tendencies within the Nation.

*Reactionaries trade in religious values and all that is most sacred to our people.* They say: —The solutions you propose and which are, according to you, of modern conception, are, in fact, solutions conceived by the human mind! Sometimes, they even go so far as to denounce as heretics those who strive to find and put forward solutions, treating them as renegades and blasphemers. For them, the solutions given in the past by Islam were of divine inspiration and are, therefore, total and definitive, and valid for all time and for all nations. They add to this; there is no need to have recourse to modernistic solutions!

In order to unmask these intrigues and manoeuvres and prove that these people only retain from the past secondary and unauthentic details, we should like to ask a few simple questions:

Were orthodox Caliphs only attached to form, as are reactionaries today? Did they always respect to the letter solutions «for all eternity»? Did the Arabs close their hearts and minds to other civilizations, when they launched out on the conquest of a new world? Did not «Oumâr Ibn Al-Khattâb» allow certain laws to be transgressed during the great famine which fell upon the Empire? Did not the Arabs devote themselves with ardour to the study of science and philosophy? Did they not undertake indefatigable research to discover a financial system corresponding to their requirements? Did they not adapt their policy to the needs and potentialities of the various provinces of their Empire? Did they not, in this way, prove that they were endowed with a flexible, scientific approach?

At the time of the Orthodox Caliphs the Arabs were real Moslems who apprehended their religion in its



essence. Was not the life of the Prophet full of vitality and creativity, a luminous example for all Arabs?

*Did not the Koran itself, by the very way in which the Prophet was inspired, teach the freshness of the idea of evolution, when it followed step by step the events marking the history of the propagation of the new religion, in a rhythm adapted to the fluctuations of reality, to change and to evolution?*

Did not the Koran state, in one magnificent verse; «A verse we remember or a verse we forget are always followed by one which is better?» Is not this a staggering proof of the malleability and the evolutionary spirit of Islam? The wellknown verse; «God does not change a nation's condition unless the nation first changes itself» is yet another proof that Islam considers progress, change and revolutions as the fundamental principles of people's lives, as a natural, balanced law, exacting that the different stages of human life be ceaselessly put into question in order that a greater degree of perfection may be attained, and ordaining the formation of ever-rising generations, capable of renovating the community and its way of life and leading them on towards progress.

Unfortunately, decadence already began to set in at the end of the Abbassidian epoch and stripped the Arabs of their revolutionary spirit and brought about the loss of the essence and the truth of their religion and of their culture. Attachment to forms, devoid of substance, began to become the rule. Reactionary attitudes took over and have continued to hold sway until the present day.

Reactionaries today are the direct descendants of these self-same reactionaries born out of decadence. Though they live physically in the 20th Century, they go on living, mentally and spiritually, in decadent eras when the breath of revolution was stifled; it is so today, ten centuries later.

The socialist principles of the ancient Arabs, which was called «Moslem socialism», was composed of «sadaqa» (alms-giving), «zakât» (tithing) and «al-ihsân» (charity). The objective of Arab socialists today is the total suppression of misery and the exploitation of Man by Man, in such a way that, throughout the width and breadth of the Arab homeland, there is not a single man who needs to be given alms, no one who awakens pity, compassion, commiseration or forbearance. What Arab socialist are aspiring to today is a fair distribution of wealth, the establishment of a vital minimum revenue for every citizen, the nationalization of public services and important means of production, and the guarantee of equality of opportunity for all citizens, without distinction.

*Is not this idea of socialism, for which the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party has militated for a long time, although of the 20th Century, in conformity with the Prophet's attitude concerning life, the spirit of Islam and Divine Will?*

Modern societies turn today to more and more radical solutions to their problems. In their first enthusiasm, the ancient Arabs gave proof of a socialist attitude, ever questing for new schemas and systems as close as possible to the socialist ideal. They disdained everything connected with pure formalism, everything rigid and congealed, or which might endanger in one way or another, evolution towards this ideal.

To resume the differences between our attitude with regard to the past and that of reactionaries, we may state that ours is *a scientific and creative one, attached to all that is fundamental and substantial and open to the future. Theirs, on the other hand, is only preoccupied with superficial and secondary matters, and sacrifices both the present and the future (with all their potentialities) to the past.* Our attitude is deeply rooted in our

authentic history. We preserve its essence and we retain its spirit —the same spirit which, in olden times, impelled revolution and the renewal of existence. It is this same spirit which impels them today on the road to progress.

### *The attitude of the «Chou'oubiyyine» (anti-Arabs)*

As for the anti-Arabs and internationalists (Stalinists), they claim to be the only detainers of scientific, progressive thought, but they wish to sever us totally from our past. In fact, their attitude is an emotional and unreflective reaction to the fanatical, sectarian attitude of conservatives.

Reactionaries want a past, devoid of a present and a future, while pseudo-progressive elements want a future without a past. To those who oppose nationalism and claim that any nationalist ideology is fundamentally reactionary, we ask the following question; —«What is progressiveness?» Is it the undoing of all temporal and spatial links? Is it not absurd and contradictory to wish to undo such links, when Man cannot live other than in a clearly-defined temporal and spatial framework? Does being progressive imply that one recognizes no national past? Does it imply the severing of oneself from national reality? Anti-nationalists behave like cosmopolitans who maintain no living contact either with their nation or with their history. The «universalistic and anti-nationalistic» attitude of pseudo-progressive elements proves that they flee in advance of the human realities of the Arab Nation. They neglect the national problem, which is, irrefutably, the key to genuine internationalism. Their progressive attitude is simply a denial and a escape; it is vitiated from the start. Their humanitarianism is bodiless, poverty —stricken, sterile. They remind us of a phra-

se of Goethe, the famous german philosopher which comes to memory in this connection: «I hear a great deal about humanity, but I see only men». We can tell them that the peculiar genius of a nation resides in the links it sustains with its past, its present and its future, and that the message which it hears for humanity can only be safeguarded in the same measure that these links are safeguarded. If we sever the past from the present and the future, we take the risk of suffocating our genius and alienating the identity of the nation; we risk deviation, if we lose sight of the principles which can keep us from downfall, from reversals, from unsurmountable contradictions and alienation.

Kant, in his time, called for universal peace, though his own country, Germany, was divided up into innumerable, tiny states. Filled with despair, the Germans lacked confidence in the future. Kant's appeal for world peace was, in fact, only submission to the fact of «Balkanization» and concealed an entreaty to colonialists. His action, in the last analysis, intoxicated the German nation and diverted it from its primary objectives, freedom and unity. When German national anthems began to awaken vibrations in German hearts, and arouse their national conscience, when revolt began to grumble and hope and confidence in the future filled the hearts of youth, Fichte, in his «Letters to the German Nation», launched his famous appeal for struggle for the Unification of Germany. In this way, he placed his finger on the knot of the problem. He understood that the path to world peace and the key to any solution of a human nature in Germany required the preliminary resolution of German national problems —to remedy its state of weakness, save it from disunion and withdraw it from foreign domination.

Fichte was a nationalist; he was even the leading-philosopher of nationalism. This made him more huma-

nistic than Kant, for he shared in the Nation's salvation; rather than in its intoxication.

Any man who is unconscious of his historic roots, and devoid of the feeling that he belongs to a human community (composed of many million people, all of whom make up the succeeding generations of the community) and who lacks a feeling of responsibility for the safe-guarding and the perpetuation of a certain heritage, can only be poor in spirit, and his life will be of mediocre and insignificant quality. Nameless, colourless, with no distinctive sign, such a man would resemble rather an object or a number than a human being.

Among those who have denied their appurtenance to the Arab Nation, there are those who, to fill the gap, adopt a foreign culture. To them, we may say that any culture, and form of logic, any theory transposed to our land, without enabling us to draw from it something useful for our cause, naturally adaptable to our existence and our deepest aspirations, anything imported and liable to assimilate and despersonalize us and place our destinies in the hands of others, is, as all other unfounded, artificial solutions, inapplicable to our reality and incapable of finding in us an echo.

Arab nationalism, as expressed in the struggle for unity and the Nation's freedom, and for the establishment of socialism, is the deepest, most positive and most vibrant aspect of our existence. It is this which gives meaning to our lives. If we are unable to protect it, we shall lose our personality, our very own genius and we shall end up totally dehumanized.

Our national cause is the starting-point of all genuine existence. If this ceases to be the case, deviations will be inevitable for us, and our culture, by becoming foreign to our reality and bearing the stamp of individualism, will become simply a mirror reflecting ideas coming from abroad.

Internationalists (Stalinists) live among us in body only; their souls are elsewhere. They approach our problems with criteria of foreign origin and a spirit which has no relation to our own reality. They have become deeply alienated by exchanging their own feeling, ideas, and souls for feelings, ideas and souls borrowed from elsewhere. Losing sight of the fundamental principles of intellectual activity and action, they have seriously gone astray and, when they find themselves unable to recover their own identity, they saddle themselves with a borrowed personality of an artificial nature.

We can only profit from theories, ideas and experience to which we can adhere, without abandoning our personality. Even if such ideas are the fruit of other nations' efforts, they can act as a stimulant for us; they can help us to understand our problems, to defend our cause and to transform the reality in which we find ourselves. Only loans that we can control and use knowingly, are capable of adaptation to our national history and of assisting us in our march towards progress. Those who approach the problem of nationalism from the point of view, both exclusive and totalitarian at one and the same time, who look on this phenomenon as part of an inseparable whole —the human cause, in general— are making a big mistake. They consider nationalistic ideology as an obstacle to the progress of humanity, as a danger liable to play havoc with nations, and even as a fundamentally antihuman phenomenon, and pass judgements on it, coloured by their ideas concerning nationalistic experience in Europe. Such experiences, however, were from the very beginning, made on a basis of grave error and dangerous prejudice. They can, therefore, in no event serve as a criterium or as a point of reference.

When soundly experienced, nationalism is the natural source of and the principle of all permeability to true

internationalism. The Arabs know that nationalism is their safest guarantee for human feelings and for the development of a truly universal culture in their society.

Their national awareness maintains them at the level of their message and their responsibilities towards the international community. Arabism is the pivot and the source of all authentic existence. Without it, danger becomes imminent, alienation and intellectual confusion inevitable. It is the gate through which we gain access to the stream of human civilizations. Internationalism which does not start from this point, is severed from our national cause, and has no connection with a historic message, remains superficial, abstract and without impact.

Those who hark back to the tragedy of «National-Socialism» in Europe to prove that any form of socialist nationalism is condemnable, and also that Stalinist internationalism is alone valid for humanity as a whole, base themselves on doubtful ideas and criteria of no logical value. When they pronounce «judgements without appeal» of this sort, against all forms of nationalism, they are inveighing against the racist and aggressive ideas which developed in Europe in very specific circumstances, marked by a certain degree of intellectual and moral decadence. Evil was inherent neither in nationalism nor in socialism —two genuine human principles —but in the fanaticism of those who spoke in the name of sacred values, and equally in the reactionary attitudes adopted by European socialist and nationalist parties. The fact that some nationalist movements veered towards chauvinism, racism and fanaticism, in no way proves this to be a general rule, to be applied obligatorily to any movement arising out of nationalist ideology. In the same way, the fact that some European socialist parties chose the parliamentary method, does not mean that this is the only way open to socialist parties in the

world or that it is the safest, the most rational and the most natural. The experience of the East, as in the West, are equally for us sources from which we can draw innumerable lessons to guide us in the struggle we are making with our people, building on a new vision of life.

### *The present, the future and ourselves*

We have discussed the attitude adopted by reactionaries with regard to our national past, but what about the present? Reactionaries believe our present condition to be decadent and vitiated, but they are in no way convinced, when they speak in this way, that such conditions should be reviewed and transformed according to scientific plans of modern conception. They think, on the contrary that decadence fell upon us because we deviated from the formulae of the past, which gave birth to an illustrious Arab civilization. According to them, we ought to reintegrate these formulae in their entirety, in order to rectify the situation. They propose no other alternatives, in their certainty that structures of the past are eternally valid. They do not stop with the present. Their attitude holds also for the future. In accordance with reactionary beliefs, those who try to divert the Arabs from the formulae applied at the time of the splendour of Arab-Moslem civilization, are the basic element in our Nation's alienation and bewilderment. In the last analysis, they want our present *and our future to be enclosed in a veritable straight-jacket made up of the structures and formulae of the past.*

Stalinist internationalists and anti-Arabs also consider our present to be unsatisfactory; but they do not believe that a solution can be found within and be thoroughly adapted to our personality. In their eyes, the degradation



of our present situation is due to the fact that we have not succeeded in getting rid of all the factors which make up our identity and distinguish us from other nations. *They aspire to a future completely foreign to us, a made-to-measure future out of a borrowed mould*, a future in which we should be totally dependent on those who created for us an identity which does not belong to us.

Reactionaries and anti-Arabs share the same attitude, which is a grave menace to Arabism. They are foreign to our truth and do their best to alienate us from it.

Reactionaries look on Arab society as if it were still in childhood, as if the events and experience of our lives had altered nothing! They have a totally erroneous idea of social life. It is as if, for them, the earth had never turned since ancient times with its high degree of Arab civilization. Do they not resemble in this an adult trying to wear the clothes he wore as a child? If we followed their ideas, should we not be childish in our intellectual formulation, in our feelings and behaviour? Their ideas are, evidently, against Nature, for no child can remain a child forever... except in death.

The logical end of reactionary thought is simply the suppression of the present and the closing of the gate to the future. For them, nothing is to be expected from the future. All we have to do is to ruminate on our past and allow it to consume itself in our hearts, destroying with it our present and our future, smothering our aspirations and... our foresight. The past, in the view of reactionaries, resembles a grave in which to bury all creative spirit, all talents and all freedom.

Stalinist internationalists and anti-Arabs have an abstract, «quantitative» view of our society, as they have of all others. Their approach kills both the qualities and the genius peculiar to each nation. They have a vision always the same — of people, nations and human socie-

ties, which deprives each one of its «raison d'être» and that which is its essence. Their form of internationalism always ends by becoming «cosmopolitanism».

Stalinist internationalists and anti-Arabs preconize a future devoid of authenticity, in which no aspect of truth can flower. All qualities and particularities are, with them, dissolved. With the loss of a climate favourable to creation and innovation, everything dwindles down into the mediocrity and uniformity of pre-conceived ideas. In the future promised by these pseudo-progressive elements, both the individual and society will be required to divest themselves of all their particular characteristics, of everything which makes up their true identity. Stalinist internationalists and anti-Arabs look at our society with foreign eyes. They stay on the surface of things and are deaf to our deepest aspirations. Being totally severed from their own Nation, they have lost all hope of one day seeing salvation spring up from within.

As for us, of the Ba'th Movement, we believe that every factor in our present life, indicates that the state in which we find ourselves corresponds neither to our requirements nor to our capacities as a people belonging integrally to the community of nations.

It is precisely in this dis-balance between the present state of things and our potential that harm arises. The Arab homeland is separated into innumerable States. The major proportion of our citizens are subjected to exploitation by a privileged minority. This is a strange and unacceptable situation. All our potentialities remain latent and our Nation's very identity is threatened with alienation. It is for this reason that Arab citizens have the feeling of belonging to an ailing, decadent society. This situation, in its contradictions and unbalance, gave rise to the birth of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party as a revolutionary movement which, brandishing the watch-words Unity, Freedom and Socialism, seeks to provoke

the total overthrow of this situation and to install a system capable of establishing a healthier society. The Ba'th wishes to give the Arab Nation the chance to express its real identity, to give it harmony, by balancing its «body» and its «soul», to help it to flower and become creative. What we call the Nation's «soul» are all its inherent potentialities. The most suitable «body» for it is an imbrication of laws and structures enabling it to concretize its possibilities.

This is how we see the Arab present —a present so deeply affected by corruption that the Arab cause is threatened with etiolation. The only way of salvation is struggle —not only in a destructive sense, but also in a constructive one. Our combat must be creative and give people a chance to reveal their talents and prove their qualities. It must make a man determined and make of him a real hero. The situation is so desperate that no partial reform, no illusory patching together can be of any avail.

*We aspire to a future time when the Nation's genius will once again find free expression, and adopt rational, stable formulae corresponding to Arab requirements, and in conformity with the spirit of the 20th Century.*

Such a future will be neither a gift nor a present. It will be neither conceived and planified by foreign States nor subsidized by foreign capital. It will be neither the fruit of politicians' imagination nor the result of one of their clever manoeuvres. The real Arab future can only be built by Arab hands; it will be the fruit of a long struggle, at the end of which all our latent potential will be liberated. It will allow us, in the fulness of its creativity, to renew our methods and our schemas. Rising Arab generations endowed with a high sense of civilization, will find themselves able to accept all challenges and respond to the needs of progress. *It is the*

*Arab people who constitute, materially and spiritually, the basis of the struggle. Our ideals and objectives must clearly express their will.*

Nothing must be imposed on them from outside, for we are convinced that any truth, however evident, if imposed on the people from above or from outside, loses its brilliance and its force. Freedom must remain the spinal column, the support of unity and socialism. To ensure a just and stable balance between the individual and society is one of the tasks we hope to see realized in the society for which we are fighting, for which the Arab people as a whole is fighting in every Region of our homeland. There will be no room in this society for liberty of a purely formal nature —and so often fictitious— of which capitalist societies are so proud, while authorizing the exploitation of Man by Man. No offence of liberty will be accepted, even if made in the name of «the supreme interest of the community» (in the phrase of various dictatorships, when they give themselves the right to trample on their citizens' liberties). We are working towards a future to be characterized by openness rather than retreat. Authenticity will be preserved, the spirit of initiative will be encouraged and human dignity will be scrupulously respected. We want nothing of a society in which human values are downtrodden and human dignity threatened by the dictatorial power of an «élite».

To end, we may state that our view of Arab history is the result, on the one hand, of a scientific analysis of the present and the past, and, on the other hand, of our faith as regards the gigantic potentialities of our Nation, together with a sense of the responsibilities we have to assume at this phase of our history. As Children of the new Arab generation, we never forget that our past historic is a long series of heroic acts and an inexhaustible source of lessons and values. Our history will in no

way be a hindrance to us, as reactionaries would have us think, nor will it be, as Stalinist internationalists and anti-Arabs, would have it, soul-less history with neither life nor specific characteristics.

Our generation's destiny will not be an easy one. The historic phase through which we are passing calls for struggle. We shall not live as the Arabs lived under the Abbassidian Caliphs Ar-Rashîd or Al-Ma'moun, both rather as people lived in the early days of Islam.

Our struggle to overthrow the present situation forces us to prepare ourselves adequately on both an ideological and a spiritual plane. We must organize our lives in such a way that we can create within the struggle and invent new ways of fighting. In this way, we shall enable future generations to create in the domain of Science, Philosophy and the Arts. All the Arab Nation's sons will find the means to cultivate their gifts and talents, and all human qualities will find expansion on a tremendous scale.

In this way, our history will continue, for ever at the level exacted by the message the Arabs bear humanity.

Speech delivered at Aleppo in 1955.

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